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THE JESUS OF HISTORY.

THE JESUS OF HISTORY.

By Sir Richard Dasis Fane

“This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”—MATT. xxi., 12.



WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON ;
AND
20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.
1869.

“ Nihil simul inventum fuit et perfectum.”

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E R R A T A.

Page 38, line 31.—For “seemed” read “secured.”
„ 68, „ 10.—For “differences” read “difference.”
„ 94, „ 20.—For “formulæ” read “formula.”
„ 244, „ 2.—For “thanksgiving” read “thanksgiving.”
„ 274, „ 1.—For “own fear for their” read “fear for their own.”
„ 288, „ 25.—For “need” read “meed.”
„ 348, „ 16.—After “false ones” add comma.

PREFACE.

THE idea of the present work was suggested to me many years since by the sermon of a popular preacher still living. He was combating the various excuses for not receiving the Gospel which he supposed might be urged by different classes of his audience, and, among others, that of not being able to hear the very words of Jesus and to witness his mighty acts. In answer to this he drew a picture of Jesus as a man of humble station and poor attire, surrounded by a few followers of the same condition in life as himself, and then asked if those who now refused to believe the report of his life would have been likely to have recognized his real dignity beneath these humble appearances. The half-formed purpose, however, of attempting a life of Jesus for the purpose of depicting him from the point of view of his contemporaries was almost at once renounced, not more on account of conscious incapacity, than because of the apparent impossibility of fusing the various evangelical narratives into a clear and consistent whole. And I was content to look upon it as a work that might one day be accomplished by some more competent enquirer.

But the idea thus suggested remained with me; and throughout the varied incidents of a not inactive life I have continued to feel an interest in whatever might tend to illustrate this aspect of the history of Jesus. And when advancing years brought with them a position of comparative leisure, I reverted to the subject; originally with the view merely of forming such a concep-

tion as might satisfy myself, and without any ulterior purpose. In doing this I wrote down my views upon many incidents, chiefly in the shape of criticisms upon various works, orthodox and rationalistic; these gradually comprised the more salient points in the biography; and this suggested the idea of methodizing and completing what I had begun. At this time I met with D'Eichthal's "*Les Evangiles*," and a perusal of that work gave a more definite form to my speculations, and suggested many new conclusions in matters of detail. It did not substantially alter my views with regard to the character in which Jesus appeared to his countrymen, nor as to the leading events of his life; but it was of great service in exhibiting the relations of the first three Gospels to each other, and thus of furnishing the materials for determining their several claims to authority. In these respects I have seen reason to concur in most of the opinions expressed by M. D'Eichthal, though in many others I have been unable to adopt his views. Probably I should scarcely have ventured upon the present work but for the assistance derived from his labours. I have in several places referred to him, but these are only a few of the instances in which particular views have been suggested by his book. I have not, however, in any case accepted an opinion upon his authority. My conclusions have uniformly been the result of an independent investigation. I have been also indebted to M. E. Scherer's review of Renan's "*Vie de Jesus*" for many valuable suggestions.

It is difficult for one who has for many years read all that he could meet with bearing upon a subject, without at first taking any notes, to separate what has

been the independent fruit of his own inquiries from what was, in the first instance, derived from others. Possibly much that appeared to me in the course of composition to be the spontaneous result of my own meditations, may have been the unconscious reproduction of something which I had previously read. This, indeed, though it might affect the character of the work for originality, could not in any way detract from the truth of its conclusions. These must rest entirely upon their own intrinsic merits.

Possibly Dr. Strauss might say of the present work, should he ever read it, as he did of Renan's "*Vie de Jesus*," that its conclusions would be very different if the author had been familiar with the recent German literature upon the subject. And I might no doubt have derived great assistance from that literature if it had been available to me; but I know the works of German authors only in translations, or through notices in reviews or summaries. So far as the life of Jesus and the earliest history of the church are concerned, the materials lie within a very small compass; and they are almost exclusively found in the New Testament itself. And with regard to the Gospels, the data for determining the time of their composition and their probable authorship are either internal, or found in a few early writers, most of whose sayings have been preserved to us by Eusebius. And the questions to be determined do not so much demand profound or extensive research, as the unbiassed exercise of the judgment; in the first place, as to the value of certain sources of evidence, and in the next as to the deductions to be drawn from the evidence ultimately preferred. And in

these matters an Englishman, who has had some experience of men and things, may perhaps be as well qualified to judge as a German professor or divine. Admitting the essential services that Germans have rendered to the cause of free thought and critical investigation, and that, but for what they have done, such a work as the present would have been well nigh impossible, it may, nevertheless, happen that a practical mind, looking at the history from a less speculative point of view, may be able to discover the causes and connection of events in circumstances and influences that have been hitherto overlooked or under-rated.

My object in the present work has been to place myself, as far as practicable, in the position of an inquirer living before the fall of Jerusalem. Such, for instance, as that of a Roman who happened to have heard of Paul's being sent as a prisoner to Rome, and wished to learn the particulars of the life of that Jesus whom he preached. Our difficulty in forming a true picture of Jesus probably arises more from our being accustomed to look at the incidents of his life chiefly through the medium of the consequences which it has produced. It is scarcely possible to resist the impression that events which have been fraught with such great results must have appeared of a corresponding importance to those who witnessed them. This *may have been the case*, but it is almost contrary to analogy that it should have been. And it would certainly seem that outside the immediate circle of his disciples the life and death of Jesus excited only a transient interest. They have left no trace upon contemporary history or literature. He entered Jerusalem in the assumed character of King

of the Jews, was delivered up by the Jewish authorities to the Roman Governor as a mover of sedition, and a few hours afterwards was tried and executed. This is all that our supposed Roman enquirer could learn in the first instance, for this is all that came under the cognizance of the Roman administration. And even this, apparently, was not known outside the limits of Palestine.

This, however, would not suffice to explain the circumstance that Jesus, as a Redeemer, was still proclaimed. To understand how that could be the case, it would be requisite to learn something as to the character which he had assumed,—the hopes to which he had appealed,—the doctrines he had taught,—and the wonders which he was supposed to have performed ; and then to enquire how it could happen, that, having been put to death, he could still be believed in as living. For this purpose the natural course would be to cause enquiries to be made in Jerusalem itself by some one residing there. At this time it is probable that the church in that place possessed written statements, not only of the teaching of Jesus, but of the events of his life, which we may suppose might have been accessible to a person in authority who shewed a friendly interest in his history. And from these, from what might be gathered from other sources, from the opinions and practices of his followers, and from a perusal of their sacred books (the Jewish Scriptures), a tolerable idea might be formed of the actual life and doctrines of Jesus, and of the circumstances to which the belief in his resurrection was owing ; and although it would not even then be altogether trustworthy, it would be as nearly accurate as in the nature of things was possible.

The position of an enquirer at the present time is very different. Our sources of information, if in part original and belonging to this early period, have been mixed with much that is of a later date; and it is not always possible to distinguish between them. The church has from the first been in a constant state of growth and development. As a living society, indeed, it was impossible it could be otherwise. This has never been more marked than during the half century that succeeded the death of Jesus. And every change in the Church itself would be reflected in its contemporary literature. If Jesus may be spoken of as the source of Christianity, it is only in the same sense as that in which we speak of the Brege as the source of the Danube. Both the creed and the stream have been swelled by innumerable accessions from sources known and unknown, and the character of each has been profoundly modified by the contributions it has received. And in the case of Christianity, its earliest modifications were probably the most important of all, since they fitted it to become the religion of the Gentiles. These changes in the position of the disciples must have produced a corresponding change in their historical writings. Even if the old were not altered, the new would depict the life of Jesus under a changed aspect—would relate new incidents, and would ascribe to him different views.

According to the uniform tradition of the Church the Gospel according to Matthew was the earliest, that according to Luke a later, and that according to John the latest of the canonical Gospels. These two latter exhibit just such a change as that we have suggested. And the nature of the change manifests a general cor-

respondence with contemporary changes in the position and tendencies of the Church.

The present work exhibits in detail reasons for the conclusion that the fourth Gospel was not the work of the Apostle John, and attempts to shew the nature of the influences to which its composition is attributable. Even if we were to accept the statement of Irenæus, that it was composed by John in extreme old age in Ephesus, it would not therefore be entitled to any more credit as a history. For John was a leading member (a pillar) of the Church at Jerusalem, certainly for nearly a quarter of a century after the death of Jesus (Gal. ii., 9), and probably till the siege of the city; during the time, therefore, in which the traditions of that Church were being formed, and when, presumably, the greater part was reduced to writing. These traditions must, consequently, have received his sanction as well as that of Peter and James and the other Apostles. And it would be impossible to attach any weight to a narrative written forty years afterwards by one Apostle, which in many particulars directly contradicts that which all the Apostles, himself included, had before authorized, and which depicts the nature and teaching of Jesus in an entirely new light.

And instead of adopting the view of M. Renan, that it is impossible to understand the life and death of Jesus excepting from the data of the fourth Gospel, the very contrary conclusion seems to be forced upon us. The Jesus whom M. Renan depicts appears to be a purely ideal character, having no relation to the actual circumstances of the time and country, and satisfying the requirements neither of the critic nor of the believer.

And this is in a great measure owing to his adoption of the fourth Gospel as an authority. It is true that the “*Vie de Jésus*” is professedly somewhat of a historical romance; even thus regarded it appears to be wanting in truth of colouring, and to present an inaccurate picture of Jesus. At the same time it is only just to acknowledge the service which it has rendered to all future enquirers by setting the example of depicting Jesus as a real human being—acting from human impulses, subject to human affections, and pursuing definite objects by human means. And it contains innumerable passages displaying great critical acumen and a subtle appreciation of character and motives.

It seems to me that the earliest, and therefore the most reliable, tradition is that which grew up in the Church at Jerusalem under the superintendence of the Apostles; and that this tradition may be traced in the first Gospel. It has a Jewish character, but only because this was the character of the opinions of the Apostles themselves. And no reason can be given why later (or even contemporary) accounts, springing up in distant localities, among persons who knew nothing, except from hearsay, either of the life of Jesus or of the circumstances in which he was placed, should be allowed equal authority. The materials employed have, therefore, been mainly derived from this Gospel. It is too much to expect that the picture presented will be accepted as true, but it may, perhaps, be allowed to be intelligible, and even probable. The Jesus who appears to be depicted in the original tradition of the disciples—the pre-Christian tradition—is a Jew, preaching to his countrymen the immediate coming of that Kingdom of Heaven for which they were

waiting, and repentance and amendment as the conditions of entrance ;—protesting against the narrow technical morality and the absorbing ritual observances of the religious guides of the people, whose hostility he thus excites ;—winning at first an amount of popular favour that awakens the fears of the government, to avoid which and the hostility of the Pharisees, he retires to Syro-Phœnicia ;—then publicly entering Jerusalem in the avowed character of the King of the Jews ;—renewing his conflicts with the Pharisees, and exciting the fears and the enmity of the Chief Priests and Elders ;—delivered by them to Pilate as a rebel against the authority of Rome ; and as such crucified. Thus viewed, his own proceedings and those of his adversaries appear natural and consistent, and his death to have been the inevitable consequence of his assumption of the character of the Messiah. For the position of the Romans in Judæa at this time was such as to render them inexorable to anyone who might threaten the public tranquillity by asserting pretensions incompatible with their authority. In their view Jerusalem was a nest of sedition, and every Jew a rebel in heart, and prepared to be a rebel in fact also whenever an opportunity offered. A person accused of rebellion, therefore, could expect little mercy at their hands.

The view thus taken may be objected to as failing to account for the faith of the disciples and the spread of Christianity. The question of the influences to which these were due will be discussed in the course of the work, and is therefore passed over now. Even, however, if that question should appear incapable of a complete answer, it must be remembered that there are forces

in nature, and in human nature especially, that may be set in motion or diverted by slight circumstances, and that the magnitude and importance of a result generally depends less upon the greatness of its so-called cause than upon the relation which it sustains to those forces. A grain of sand may be the origin of a pearl. A trifling obstruction may be the occasion of changing the course of a stream; and the effects of an explosion bear no relation to the force inherent in the spark. In history, too, the instances are innumerable in which consequences, at once wide-spread and enduring, have resulted from some seemingly trivial occurrence. Up to the present time Christianity certainly has not influenced as many lives as Buddhism. And yet there is probably no one, certainly there is no Christian, who would contend on that account that the origin of Buddhism was miraculous or divine.

An attempt has been made to exhibit the teaching of Jesus as it was understood by those to whom it was addressed. The ordinary method of interpretation, even when it confines itself to elucidating the meaning of the language employed, instead of endeavouring to set forth all that may be deduced from it, appears to err in two ways. It sometimes treats as absolute what was necessarily relative, and it sometimes practically attributes to Jesus a kind of dissimulation, or economy, by giving to his words a meaning that shall make them harmonize with other writings of the New Testament. As an instance of the former, we may refer to the phrase, "What therefore God hath joined let not man put asunder;" and of the latter, the closing words of the Sermon on the Mount. But even if the modern interpretation

were true for us, it obviously would not have been true for those to whom Jesus spoke; since they could only judge of his meaning according to their existing view of his character, and with reference to the nature and aspect of the questions with which he dealt.

And it may even be doubted whether the teaching of Jesus was not in many respects relative in a wider sense than is here suggested. In other circumstances, and to a different people, we may conjecture that his lessons would have been of a different character, and would have enforced other duties. There are times when self-respect is more important than humility, and self-assertion than self-denial. And this truth was practically exemplified by Jesus in his conduct when confronted with the Doctors of the Law, and questioned by the Chief Priests. To the Jew—proud of his descent from Abraham, and of his exclusive knowledge of the one true God, and both hating and despising the rest of mankind—the lessons taught by Jesus had a peculiar appropriateness. To the monk in his cloister, on the other hand, and to the Jesuit in his seminary, to all those Christians, in fact, who deem it a mark of humility to yield a blind obedience to their spiritual guide, and of self-denial to renounce all exercise of reason in matters of faith, we may believe that Jesus would have enforced the opposite virtues of independence and self-reliance.

The conclusions put forth in the present work have not been reached without many struggles. It is no slight matter to part with convictions that have been cherished for years, and that are associated with the memories of those whom we loved and honoured. And sometimes the feeling will intrude that in sacrificing

the old beliefs there has been also a sacrifice of the only assured ground of confidence amid the sorrows of the present, and in anticipation of the unknown future. But perhaps the belief in a God, who is both just and merciful, who will render to all men according to the deeds done in the body, yet not without remembering the feebleness and frailty of the beings he has made, may rest with equal confidence upon the instincts of our nature and our experiences of the course of his dealings with the world, as upon a critical or evidential process that shall satisfy us of the genuineness and authority of the books of the New Testament, or upon a slavish submission to the dogmas of a self-styled infallible church. It is no uncommon occurrence that augmented knowledge produces a distrust of our early opinions, or that in many things, often of great importance, we are, after all, only able to reach a "per-adventure." But this forms no reason for abandoning our investigations. They who are most confident are not always the most safe, and freedom from doubt is perhaps more often the result of ignorance than of knowledge. Blind faith may err as well as "blind unbelief," and God's purposes will ultimately be as plain to the doubter as to the credulous—to the fearless enquirer, as to him who has shunned all enquiry as sinful. But still, though the reason may be convinced, the feelings will sometimes refuse to be satisfied. They are dissevered from their ancient roots, and it is not always possible for them to put forth equally vigorous roots in the new soil.

The plan that I have pursued has necessarily involved the consideration of the same subject under different aspects, and has thus led to occasional repetitions, chiefly

in reference to the fourth Gospel and the writings of Paul. On the whole, however, this inconvenience appeared to be outweighed by the advantages resulting from treating every subject as subordinate to the history of Jesus, and of the development of the dogma with regard to his nature. And this must also be my apology for the incomplete manner in which many of the topics are discussed. My object has not been to write a commentary. Many subjects that would well justify a complete examination have been only partially investigated, and many that possess great interest have been passed over altogether. Among these may be mentioned the similarity between many passages in the first Gospel and in the writings of Paul ; the contrast between Paul's writings and the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles ; and the relations of James, the brother of Jesus, to Jesus himself during his lifetime and to the Church afterwards. This last enquiry, if followed up, might perhaps shew that, while the Church was founded upon a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and in his resurrection, its organization and its form of government were due to James, the traditional first Bishop of Jerusalem.

Such a work as the present cannot be put forth without exposing the writer to the charge of irreverence and, perhaps, of profanity. In so far as such charges may be intended to imply an absence of the recognition of the proper deity of Jesus, and a conception of his character as entirely human, it must be admitted that they are well founded. For this is necessarily the view taken in the work. But if they mean that its tone is unsuited to the discussion of grave questions, which so

many persons view under an entirely different aspect, or that it is calculated wantonly to wound the feelings of those who do believe in the divinity of Jesus, they would appear to be unwarranted; at least, nothing has been intentionally said that could have this effect. No doubt the very attempt to treat the subject from a purely historical point of view; to judge of the acts and to estimate the motives of Jesus as we should those of any other character in history; to subject the various accounts of his life to the same species of criticism that would be applied to purely secular literature; to accept or reject statements, wherever found, without regard to the supposed infallibility of the writers that relate them, must shock many. But then those who would be so shocked are precisely the persons who may be trusted not to read the work. And those who do read it are bound to remember that this mode of treatment is necessary, if any historical certainty is to be hoped for; and that the reverence which forbids analysis and discrimination must ultimately produce, not stability, but retrogression and decay.

I may add that the work was commenced in the beginning of 1866, and was finished, with one or two trifling exceptions, in September in the following year. And I must bespeak indulgence for the errors that are almost sure to be found when, as in the present case, the author has not had an opportunity of correcting his work while passing through the press.

MARCH, 1869.

THE JESUS OF HISTORY.

INTRODUCTION.

THE present work is conceived from an entirely historical point of view. Its object is to ascertain and depict the incidents of the life of Jesus—the nature of his teaching, the character he assumed, and the causes of the opposition he encountered, and to which he ultimately fell a victim. It is not intended, however, to prejudge, nor to exclude the theological view; to which it offers no necessary contradiction. That view must ultimately rest upon other than historical grounds; and whatever else Jesus may have been, there is no question that he was a man. He grew up from infancy to manhood, living the ordinary life of a Jew of the poorer class, and without, so far as appears, exciting any particular attention. He was a man living with men and women; eating and sleeping; moving from place to place; sometimes welcome, sometimes rejected; teaching lessons that bore a certain relation to the opinions and feelings of his hearers; loved, followed, obeyed, hated, betrayed, and crucified. All this is admitted by the most orthodox theology. There have been, and still are, disputes whether Jesus was more than human; but all modern Christians assert that he was truly and emphatically man. The attempt, therefore, to depict, in accurate outline, his human history is not, in principle, at variance with the theological idea, though its results may be expected to conflict with some received opinions.

The life of Jesus cannot, any more than that of other men, be understood apart from the circumstances of the age and

country in which he lived. If even it were admitted that his mental and moral and spiritual development was entirely the result of his own essential nature—that it owed nothing to the knowledge, and was uninfluenced by the opinions of his contemporaries, which, from the historical point of view is inadmissible,—still, in order to understand the effect he produced, the truths he taught, or that were received from his teaching, the character that he assumed or was supposed to possess, we must inform ourselves of the opinions of those to whom he spoke. That which he taught, in fact, was what his hearers understood him to mean. And the character he assumed was that which his disciples and contemporaries believed to be his.

This conclusion is quite independent of the question whether his teaching might not include elements that escaped the popular apprehension, and even the judgment of his disciples. Such might have been the case, and men of the present generation may be able to discover depths of meaning in his recorded words of which no contemporary ever dreamed. But even in that case, what he actually taught was what his hearers or disciples received. And in order to understand this it is necessary to know not merely his words, but, as far possible, their opinions also; since it is to the combined operation of both that the actual result was due. This, too, is necessary, not only in order that we may be able to realize his character as it appeared to those among whom he lived, but also that we may be able to judge fairly of their conduct to him. To us, who look at his life and their opposition through the medium of prepossessions necessarily arising from the views as to his nature in the midst of which we have grown up, and which were among the earliest lessons impressed upon us in our childhood, the hatred he provoked and the death he endured will appear altogether without excuse. But to those whose practices he condemned, whose character he assailed, whose teachings he freely contradicted, and whose position he endangered, the case was necessarily different.

And, in order to do justice to them, it is requisite that we should be able to place ourselves in idea, to some extent at least, in their position. It may be that our ultimate judgment will be little affected by this. Any opinion, however, we may form before we have attempted to understand the circumstances, as they appeared to his opponents, is necessarily partial. Our conclusions may be correct, but we have not qualified ourselves to determine whether they are so or not.

Having thus endeavoured to enable ourselves to understand the teaching and character of Jesus from the contemporary standpoint, we have next to attempt to appreciate the materials for determining what that teaching and character really were. These materials are found almost exclusively in the New Testament, and principally in the four Gospels. It is necessary therefore to inquire into the origin of these writings, and to what extent they may be accepted as reliable. They do not, at least absolutely, agree among themselves. The pictures they give of the lessons taught by Jesus, and of the events of his public life, even if susceptible of reconciliation, are, at first sight, inconsistent under some aspects. We cannot, therefore, upon any hypothesis, escape the necessity of some critical enquiries, for the purpose of determining which view we are to adopt—whether one representation or another is to be taken as accurate, or whether the various representations are to be combined, and if so, in what manner.

And these enquiries, once commenced, must go further. We must ascertain, as far as possible, the claims of the various narratives to be regarded as historically true under the two aspects of external and internal evidence: what reason there is for supposing that they were written by the persons whose names are now attached to them, and how far the historians themselves possess the marks of truthfulness. And this latter enquiry does not necessarily or even presumably affect the honesty of the writers. Many an honest man has given a very untrue account of matters that passed under his own

observation, and still more of matters that he knew only from hearsay. Even in courts of justice, with all the safeguards of publicity and of cross-examination, and though testimony is given under the sanction of an oath, and with the risk of punishment if false, it is a rare event for any lengthened statement to be made which any one experienced in such matters is able to believe to be true throughout. It will be coloured by the feelings of the witness, and bear the impress of his character. It will be affected by his faculty of perception, by his habits of observation, by his imagination ; and it will need invariably some deduction or filling up to make it accord with the fact ; and yet all the while the witness may intend to speak the simple and entire truth, and may believe that he is doing so. To assume, therefore, that a narrative may be inaccurate does not imply that the narrator is untruthful. Even on the supposition that the Gospels were written by eye-witnesses, or by those who directly reproduce the testimony of eye-witnesses, we should not, consequently, be absolved from the task of scrutinizing them for the purpose of endeavouring to construct for ourselves, out of the materials they supply, a true conception of the facts that suggested them.

In doing this it will be impossible to avoid the question of miracles. The accounts given of the life of Jesus all assert that he wrought miracles, properly so called—that he either produced effects which no natural cause is able to produce, as when he raised the dead ; or that he produced effects to which natural causes are adequate, in the absence of those natural causes, as when he made wine out of water ;—and the theological idea of Jesus is essentially that of a person who had power over nature, and was able to suspend or dispense with natural processes. It is obvious that our conclusions as to the accuracy of the New Testament narratives may be very different according to the opinions we entertain upon this question, and that they may affect the view we ultimately take of the nature of Jesus himself.

If we accept the ordinary view that it is entirely a matter of testimony, that one or two persons may be believed when they speak to some ordinary occurrence, and that more extraordinary events may be believed upon the concurrent report of a greater number, but that there is no event absolutely incredible so that it may not be proved by an assignable amount of evidence,—the question at first sight appears settled in principle. And yet it is not so. The event may be proved, and it may be of a nature utterly at variance with our conceptions of what is possible in nature,—as inconceivable to us as was the existence of Antipodes to a previous generation ; and yet this would not entitle us to conclude its miraculous character. Such a conclusion would be admissible only upon the assumption that our knowledge is sufficiently complete to enable us to determine what is and what is not within the powers of nature ; an assumption few will venture to make. For, even assuming that inconceivableness is a test of natural impossibility, it must be, from its very character, a relative and a shifting test ; sufficient no doubt for practical purposes, but not having any absolute value. The very fact, indeed, of an event previously inconceivable having occurred, would be at once a proof that it was possible, and a presumption of the very strongest kind that it was natural. The evidence, for instance, to show that a dead body rose from the grave, became animated, walked, ate, conversed, would only shew that in some, as yet, inexplicable mode, the forces that produce the phenomena of life had resumed their influence over the organization ; and this would furnish a new object for scientific enquiry. But as all the forces that the resuscitated body would manifest in the supposed case are natural, the fact of their manifestation, even if established, could not shew anything beyond, or above nature. Even, therefore, if we admit that the testimony of a given number of witnesses could prove such a reanimation, that would not afford any adequate ground for concluding it to be miraculous. The facts which the testimony would estab-

lish would be natural processes—volition, motion, mastication, assimilation—and from these natural results it is impossible to draw any legitimate inference to a cause that is not natural.

In fact, however, every one practically holds that there is a limit to the effect of evidence, and that there are incidents which no amount of testimony would render credible. No Protestant, probably, would be convinced that the miracle of St. Denys had been repeated during the French Revolution—that a Romish priest, after being guillotined, had picked up his head and walked away with it. No Christian would believe that true miracles were wrought at the shrines of Siva or Vishnu, or that an Indian conjuror was able to cause rain by his incantations, or to excite or to allay a storm. Any number of eye-witnesses might be produced, to prove the alleged fact, but the antecedent improbability of the occurrence would outweigh them all. It is not a question of testimony, but of faith. Facts which conflict with received beliefs will be discredited in spite of evidence, or rather they will be contemptuously dismissed as undeserving of enquiry; and facts which harmonize with these beliefs will be accepted almost without examination, merely upon the ground of their general reception. Those who admit miracles are guided in their judgment of particular alleged miraculous events by the opinion they have formed of the character of God. It is natural, according to their view of his nature, that he should work or permit miracles for certain purposes, and that he should not work or permit miracles for certain other purposes; and accordingly they admit those of the former and reject those of the latter class.

It has been often said that to deny miracles is to deny to God a power which is possessed by man—that of operating upon nature and changing its course. Those who have employed this argument have not, however, apparently considered its real character; for it assumes a resemblance between God

and man in the essential feature of the case. It implies, therefore, that God is a part of nature as man is, and changes nature only by obeying its laws. Man can neither add to nor diminish matter or force. All that he can do is to avail himself of his knowledge of the properties of matter to change the form of matter. His power, in fact, is well nigh limited to this—that he can alter the position of substances in order that certain results may be produced by their contiguity, or may be prevented by their separation ; and in order to do this he must have availed himself of the forces latent in the food he has swallowed. These, by their transformation into nervous and muscular force, render possible the manifestation of his will, and the corresponding acts of the body by which his volitions are accomplished ; and there is no difference in kind, but only in degree,¹ between the effects produced by man and those produced by animals. The analogy, therefore, assumed in the argument is one which those who have employed it would be among the first to repudiate ; and if the analogy really existed it would shew that the alleged miracles were not really such, but only the results of a knowledge and power beyond the present capacities of humanity.

These considerations, however, though they may, to those who admit their force, authorize the rejection of the interpretation which the New Testament writers have put upon the facts they relate, do not absolve us from enquiring into the truth of those facts. It is quite within the province of evidence to prove, for instance, the crucifixion of Jesus, and that after his crucifixion he was seen by his disciples, and ate and drank with them. It will be, therefore, necessary in this and in other cases to examine the nature of the evidence, and to estimate its force, in order that we may be enabled to ascertain the conclusions it appears to authorize ; and it is only in the event of its proving, upon examination, sufficient to establish the

¹ This limitation is, in fact, needless. The works of the coral animals exceed all that man has done since the beginning of his race.

truth of the events, regarded as merely wonderful occurrences, that the after question of their miraculous nature can arise.

Having thus endeavoured to place ourselves in a position to draw reliable conclusions, we may attempt to construct a narrative, meagre at the best, and necessarily, in part, conjectural, that may enable us, in some degree, to see Jesus as he appeared to the eyes of his contemporaries;—to understand how he gathered disciples, and with what hopes they were animated. We may also endeavour to depict the true character of his teaching—to what hopes he appealed, and what precepts he inculcated; and these investigations may enable us to account for his ultimate execution as a criminal against Rome. We shall then attempt to explain how it was that the faith of his disciples, instead of being destroyed by his death, became only the more confirmed and exalted, and how they were led to attach to his second coming the anticipations they had originally expected to be realized during his life on earth. And then we may finally essay to indicate the process by which the Jesus of the three first Gospels was elevated in the creed of the Church to an equality with the Father himself.

Such a work cannot but shock many prejudices, and wound many sincere and liberal minds,—just in the same manner as a critical history of the life of Mary, shewing her as the wife of Joseph, and the mother of many children, and having no honour whatever in the early legend, would shock the prejudices and wound the feelings of a devout Romanist.¹ It is, therefore, a question whether the circumstance that the result of certain enquiries may shock men whom you respect and admire, and with whom, under many aspects, you cordially

¹ The author of “The Eclipse of Faith,” who is a kind of orthodox Voltaire, on a very reduced scale, is very indignant with Mr. F. W. Newman for publishing views with regard to the character of Jesus, that he knows would shock sincere Christians. But Mr. Henry Rogers, in his “Essays, reprinted from the Edinburgh Review,” is anything but respectful to the Virgin, and does not scruple to charge an eminent Romish Saint (Ambrose) with deliberately fabricating a miracle;—without regarding the pain he would cause to sincere Romanists. Mr. Rogers is, no doubt, right in this, but that implies that Mr. Newman is right also.

sympathize, should induce you to refrain from publishing your conclusions; and it would seem that it should not—at least at the present time.

The enquiries with which this work is concerned are familiar now to thousands, and are discussed in a hundred forms, and in the interest of every variety of creed and sect. Their importance and interest are unquestionable; and it is only by means of a complete investigation of the subject, under every aspect, that any conclusions can be established in which the majority of thinkers can be expected to agree. The doubts I entertain arise rather from my consciousness of the necessary incompleteness of the work, and from my knowledge that much it contains has been said before by others. As, however, I have accepted no views without examination, but have, in all cases, worked out my own conclusions for myself, and as the results at which I have arrived differ in many respects from any I have yet seen, I have determined to publish them. Possibly the book may contain nothing that has not been said before. It is, perhaps, too much to expect to be able to write anything original upon a subject so exhausted; even then, however, it may not be without its use—to have represented old ideas under a fresh aspect and in new combinations.

Some apologists are accustomed to rely upon the wide diffusion and the purifying and elevating influence of Christianity as proofs of its divine origin and absolute truth. So far, however, as the former is concerned, it may be a question whether the true inference is not the very reverse;—whether the wide prevalence of the belief does not rather suggest that there must have been some alloy of human error mixed with the truths it contains. It would not be easy to point out any great movement in religion or politics that has not been in part based upon a delusion, to which it has owed a portion at least of its success. This will be admitted to be the case

in religious movements by most or all Protestants, with two exceptions: Christianity itself during the first few centuries, and the particular sect or form of Christianity to which they adhere. Brahminism, Budhism, Mahometanism, Romanism, the Greek Church;—the most widely spread forms of religion will be allowed to owe their success, in part, no doubt, to the elements of truth they contain, but mainly to the errors with which the truth is intermingled; and Romanists would, of course, say the same with regard to Protestantism,—perhaps with equal truth.

In all the great conquests of Christianity, too, at least since the apostolic age, it would appear that its success has been owing to the degree in which the aggressive faith assimilated, or was capable of being combined with the superstitions of the people who were converted; and even now, among all savage tribes, it is in vain that the purest and most orthodox dogmas are taught according to the standard of the church to which the missionary belongs. In spite of every effort the ideas attempted to be conveyed suffer an inevitable process of transmutation in the mind of the convert, and are, in fact, capable of being received only by this means. The creed actually learned is very different from that intended to be taught. The missionary may be seemingly successful. Whole peoples may catch the impulse and hasten to be baptized. They may dethrone their idols, and either destroy or purify their temples. They may not only repeat the prescribed creed, and profess their belief in whatever their teacher declares to be true, but they may abandon many of their old licentious or sanguinary practices, and outwardly conform to the Christian standard of morals. And here and there one of an exceptional organization may really experience the influence of the faith he professes. With the vast majority, however, the change is little more than superficial. The old superstitions remain, though probably not in their original form; they are blended with the new ideas, and the result is an incongruous jumble,

at once grotesque and unintelligible: all the while, however, the outward appearance of conformity is maintained, and it is only when some incident occurs to strip off the veil and to disclose what it has concealed, that the mere spectator has any opportunity of knowing the real state of the case.¹ And generations must pass away before the old beliefs finally die out (if they ever do so), and are replaced by the new faith.

We need not, however, go to savage nations in order to find this result. Any one who has been in the habit of hearing lay preachers among the aberrant forms of methodism, or has been present at prayer meetings of uneducated or half-educated men,² must be aware how low and unworthy are their ideas of God, how grotesque even are many of their views of Heaven and Hell; how, that is, their conception of Christianity supposed to be derived from the Bible is, in fact, the result of their own habits of thought and feeling: and a little reflection will probably shew that this process is inevitable; for ideas and feelings interpenetrate each other in the human mind as certainly as gases in the receiver of the chemist. There are few, indeed, who consider the subject but will admit, not merely that error has been the invariable, if not the necessary accompaniment of religious truth, but also that the error which a system contains, always excepting their own, has been one of the causes of its success.

But then, if—waiving for the moment all consideration of the persons by whom it was presented—we ask what there was in the age that witnessed the first triumphs of Christianity, or in the persons to whom it was proclaimed, that should have enabled a pure and unmixed system of truth to spread and establish itself, it is difficult to see what answer can be given.

¹ Instructive illustrations have recently occurred among the New Zealanders in the Hau-hau superstition, and amongst the Chinese. The whole history of the conversion of the northern nations is, however, a commentary upon the statement made in the text.

² Or, we might say, has read some of the early sermons of Mr. Spurgeon in the cheap religious reports.

There is certainly nothing to suggest any peculiar superiority in the early converts to the Christian faith over its modern professors. "The first outburst of Pentecostal communism," as it has been called, was not altogether excellent, either in itself or in its consequences; and we can see that the faith of the first generation of believers was, in part, founded upon a mistake. One principal cause of the original progress of Christianity was the expectation of the speedy second coming of Jesus, and the resurrection of the departed, and transformation of the living saints at his appearance. It was as the Messiah—the promised King, whose immediate advent should inaugurate the kingdom of heaven upon earth, should exalt his followers and punish his enemies—that Jesus was preached. This was the good news proclaimed by the apostles; but this, in the sense in which it was received by the primitive converts, was an unfounded expectation. Those who had embraced Christianity in the belief that they should witness the triumphant return of the crucified Christ,—should with their bodily organs hear the blast of the trumpet that proclaimed his coming, and see the hosts of surrounding angels that gave a more than earthly magnificence to his reappearing,—passed away, one by one, without the fulfilment of their expectations. Those whom Paul addressed did, in fact, "all sleep," and none of them were "changed."¹ Not one has remained alive to witness the coming of the Lord, and to be caught up in the air to meet him;² and if, in this particular, the early converts have been proved to be mistaken by the irresistible logic of events, it is clear that no inference as to the absolute truth of the historical basis of Christianity can be drawn from the circumstance of its having been accepted by them.³

¹ 1 Cor. xv., 51, 52.

² 1 Thess. iv., 15-17.

³ Modern orthodox commentators almost uniformly deny that such was the expectation of the early Church, or the teaching of Paul; and some even accuse of dishonesty those who infer that it was. How far this denial is warranted may be judged of by anyone who will simply read the chapters to which we have referred. No one in the present day, excepting a person who, like Dr. Cumming, fancies he believes

And with regard to the influence of Christianity, it would seem that there is much exaggeration in the views entertained upon that subject, and even a misconception of its true standpoint. The recent arguments upon this subject would, in fact, have been scarcely intelligible to the early fathers and apologists, and if they had understood them they would have rejected them. Their conception of Christianity was that it was a preparation for a coming age, and also for another world, not an instrument for the improvement of the present; and this still continues to be the prevalent opinion among those who consider themselves to be especially Christians, members of the body and heirs of the kingdom of Christ. To be wise, or learned, or rich, or peaceful, or happy, was for the individual believer rather a snare and a peril than an advantage. The kingdom of Christ was not of this world, and its results were not to be looked for here, unless in so far as they were realized by faith. The friendship of this world was enmity with God.¹ If the Christian found himself in harmony with circumstances,—if an uniform course of steady and well-directed industry, and an unselfish regard for the rights and feelings of others, had produced their natural consequences of material well-being and social respect, this proof of conformity to the world would at least raise a presumption that he had, in some degree, deserved the enmity in the near termination of the existing order of things, and wishes his readers to believe so too, could use such expressions as those employed by Paul—“Brethren, we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed.” . . . “The dead shall be raised first, incorruptible, and we (who therefore will not be among the dead) shall be changed;” or, “then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the air, etc.” And the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, if genuine, only enforces the continued obligation of all relative duties, since the coming of Jesus is not so immediate as to dispense with their observance. Whatever might be the hindrance to which Paul alluded, we may be quite sure it was some existing person or system, known to his readers, and, therefore, presumably unknown to us. This latter epistle, too, is earlier than the first to the Corinthians, and cannot, therefore, qualify the deductions to be drawn from the language employed by Paul in the latter.

¹ The author of the little work, “Is it possible to make the best of both Worlds?” would have been regarded as a heretic then, as, probably, many regard him now. The logical inference from the writer’s reasonings in that work excludes the theological doctrine of the fall; for they shew that man and nature are so far in unison that by obeying the laws of nature man will be virtuous and happy.

of God: at the lowest these temporal blessings might induce him to rest satisfied with his present lot, might dim the eye of faith and weaken the aspirations or even change the object of hope. These moral virtues, too, were insignificant;—they might be splendid sins. Without faith it was impossible to please God, and with faith all other excellencies were, at least, implicitly connected; and considering the utter insignificance, on the Christian scheme, of the present life, as compared with the eternity that was to follow, no inconvenience or privation or suffering was worthy to be regarded for a moment, if its existence removed an obstacle to the fuller growth of the inward and spiritual life.

To improve the moral or physical aspect of society was, therefore, no part of the Christian scheme. That it should, in fact, have done so was no subject of congratulation, but rather to be feared and possibly to be regretted; at any rate it was an absolutely insignificant result: if one soul was lost in consequence, what would the earthly happiness and virtue of millions weigh if balanced against that eternal misery;¹ and if not, what did it matter at the best? No more than a single smile of an infant in its cradle, procured by some momentary pleasure, as compared with the happiness or misery of its whole future life. There may be a question whether this was the teaching of Jesus, but there can be no question that this is the spirit of orthodox Christianity. If, therefore, there is any weight in the argument we are considering, it would only shew that much of the fundamental Christian dogma is erroneous.

If, too, we fairly estimate the actual effects of Christianity, a great deduction would have to be made from the opinions

¹ This was written before I had seen Father Newman's "Apologia," or was aware that he had put forth a somewhat analogous statement—that it was better the whole world should perish in extremest agony, rather than that a single person should commit one, seemingly, trifling sin. His statement, however, appears to me to be an exaggeration of the teaching of the Church; necessary, however, if the Inquisition is to be vindicated.

ordinarily held upon the subject. We are apt to compare modern Protestant England and America (for they are Protestant writers who chiefly employ these arguments—Romanists regard the true triumphs of the church to have been the suppression of heresy) with some fancied picture of ancient society ; and, when this has been done, we assume that all the features in which we trace a superiority in the present as thus compared with the past, are due to the Christian religion. We forget, however, that these two countries are but a small part of Christendom, and that, apart from the question whether the comparison we have instituted is accurate, and whether all the fancied improvements are real, there have been many other influences at work to produce their present condition ; and, looking at Christian countries as a whole, is it quite certain that they have so much improved as the writings of apologists would lead us to suppose ? Is Rome, with its surrounding district, so much more distinguished for the virtues of patience, temperance, toleration, and chastity, than the Rome of the early days of the Republic ; are the conceptions the Romans entertain of the beings to whom they pray so much more elevated ; is their worship even so much less polytheistic than that of their Pagan ancestors,—as that the result can be attributed to nothing but the teaching of what, in its origin, at least, was pure and unmixed truth ? And similar questions might be asked with regard to Naples and Spain. If Russia, too, is compared with China, or the modern Germans with their pre-Christian ancestors, it may be a question, possibly, not whether there is any superiority in the Christian over the heathen country or age, but certainly whether that superiority necessarily implies absolute truth in the fundamental Christian doctrine. It may, no doubt, be said that these alleged or admitted shortcomings are the result, not of Christianity, but of its corruptions. But the question is, what have been the actual practical effects of Christianity ? And these are its effects—its own corruption among the rest. It has had

eighteen hundred years to work in, during which there have been many lessons taught by experience, tending to shew how evil may be averted and good promoted ; and at the end this is its result, in these countries at least.

If, too, we analyze the influences to which our assumed Protestant superiority is owing, we shall probably find that their origin is due to ideas and principles outside of the Christian creed, which, at their first introduction, were resisted by all Christian teachers, as they continue to be by the majority. In so far as Protestant countries shew any material and social superiority to those which are Catholic, they exhibit the influence of secular principles as contradistinguished from religious. They recognize, both in theory and in practice, the importance and value of the present state of being, and the power man possesses to control nature and to shape his own destiny;¹ and hence their whole political and social organization is directed to secure to man that freedom of action and thought which is necessary to enable him to develope his own faculties, and to employ them to the best advantage, and to protect him in the enjoyment of the fruits of his labours.

The Christian ideal is a kingdom in which the material shall be subordinated to the spiritual, and in which all, having food and raiment, shall be therewith content, devoting their highest energies to the promotion of their religious well-being. The ideal of England and of the United States is a government essentially human and secular in its organization, instruments, and objects ; dealing exclusively with the affairs of this life, trusting solely to temporal motions and sanctions, and leaving every one to cultivate or neglect his spiritual nature as he may feel disposed. It may be doubted whether the toleration of error in religious matters is a Christian virtue, though it seems to

¹ Even theologians in Protestant countries recognize this ; for while exalting in words the necessity of supernatural assistance or support, they inculcate with equal energy the necessity of human effort. "Pray as though God did everything, and work as though you did everything yourself," is a common formula. Obviously, there is not much practical faith here in anything but the power of work.

result from some parts, at least, of the teaching of Jesus,—for the ultimate principle of toleration appears to be that truth is either unknown or indifferent; but there can be no doubt that the distinctive characteristics of English and American progress result from this toleration. Possibly the assertion so often made by Protestant writers is true, that there is as much, or more, of “vital godliness” in these two countries, as compared with any Roman Catholic community, in spite, or it may be in consequence, of their exclusively secular, political, organization. Upon this we pronounce no opinion. It is outside of our present purpose—which is only to shew that much of what recent apologists have claimed as the results of Christianity has, in truth, a very different source.

The same conclusions might be reached by other processes. Our philosophy, our science, our spirit of investigation, our feeling of personal independence, our self assertion, are, if not unchristian, at least not derived from Christianity. They may be forced into apparent harmony with an orthodox creed, but they are independent of it. If they have in part vindicated their claim to subsist side by side with the Christian profession, it is only after many struggles, and in spite of strenuous opposition; and even now their spirit is denounced by all but a few theologians, not only on account of their consequences, but also on account of their essential character.

On the one hand, that men should claim to judge of the moral nature of actions from their consequences, and thus erect for themselves an independent standard of right and wrong, was felt to be inconsistent with the Christian idea, that the revealed will of God was the sole, or at least the ultimate, test of good and evil. And, on the other hand, that man should interpret for himself the phenomena by which he was surrounded, should attempt to refer all events, some the most apparently insoluble, to intelligible processes capable of being explained and verified, was at variance with the Christian conception of a God ruling all affairs according to his own

will, and employing storm and drought and famine and pestilence as his instruments to punish the sinful and the rebellious ; and it was at variance also with the Christian belief in the power of prayer. Hence the progress of moral and political and physical science, and the spirit in which their enquiries have been prosecuted, to which no small portion of the alleged superiority of modern society is owing, have always been regarded with hostility or distrust by the Christian Church ; and hence, also, a large deduction must be made from the alleged influence of Christianity, as an instrument of moral elevation and social improvement.

That the influence of Christianity has, upon the whole, been beneficial, having regard to the temporal well-being of Christian countries, may be the case. That the influence of the principles of Christian morality, with their associated religious ideas, has been, and continues to be, beneficial in Great Britain and the United States, is even probable ; but there are many matters to be taken into consideration before either of these conclusions can be regarded as established. If, in addition to religious wars and persecutions, springing out of the claim of the various churches and sects to possess that particular shade of truth, a belief in which was necessary to salvation, we add the essentially Christian persecution for witchcraft, and the sufferings still occasioned by the spirit of proselytism, and by the social persecutions that are necessarily connected with the doctrine of exclusive salvation,—it will be seen that a more than ordinary amount of earthly well-being, as the product of the Christian faith, is required to balance these ; and, at any rate, the fruits of Christianity have not been so uniformly, or absolutely, good as to compel us to admit that the faith from which they sprung was wholly free from error.

These remarks, it will be seen, are only directed to answer one form of objection to such results as those which are arrived at in the present work. They do not touch the convictions of believers who look at Christianity in its purely religious aspect.

To such, its value is not what it does for time, but what it procures for eternity—not that it removes sorrow or suffering here, but that it promises blessedness hereafter. They, consequently, may admit that it has done nothing to improve political institutions, to enlarge the sphere of knowledge, or to raise the scale of physical well-being without, on that account, abating one jot of their belief in its divine origin and perfect character. With such believers, however, there is, upon the ground of historical investigation, no possibility of argument; for the effects upon which their belief is based are, by their very nature, removed beyond enquiry and verification. They are either states of feeling known in their reality only to the individual believer—or the unseen and the future—capable of being realized only by the power of faith; and as this faith and those feelings are obviously compatible with many erroneous conclusions in matters of fact, their reality would not, of itself, imply the absolute certainty of the historical grounds upon which they are based. They are independent of testimony, and are, probably, most powerful in those who have never examined the grounds of their belief. Neither therefore their existence, nor the character of their effects, can furnish any presumption against such an enquiry as we have instituted.

The essential portions of Christianity—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man—the necessity and the value of the feeling of repentance and the assurance of pardon—a faith in the unseen and eternal, in the ultimate triumph of good and subjugation of evil, and of a retribution which shall render to every man according to his deeds, have, no doubt, a deep moral significance, and a truth not the less real, because they are necessarily coloured by our imperfect apprehension, and are incapable of being adequately presented in any metaphysical formula, or circumscribed by any logical definition. We are not, however, on this account to conclude that the human history with which their origin is popularly connected is beyond the scope of our enquiries. There is always some-

thing in great events and in great characters that escapes our analysis: probably there always will be; but we do not, therefore, refrain from attempting to understand and to record them. Such an attempt, with regard to the founder of Christianity, will be found in the following pages.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

JUDAISM.

THE position of the Jewish people at the commencement of the public ministry of Jesus was not, to an ordinary observer, noticeably distinguished from that of other nations subject to the dominion of Rome. They were permitted to practice their own forms of religious worship, and to preserve their civil and social organization so far as this was compatible with the exercise of Roman authority. That they bore the yoke impatiently, and that their religion was incapable of amalgamating with that of their conquerors, were characteristics of other races also,—among the rest, of the Britons. And judged by its effects upon their morals, there was nothing in the faith they professed to suggest any peculiar claims to respect. Rigidly scrupulous in ceremonial observances,—guarding themselves against ceremonial pollution,—shrinking from intercourse with men of another creed, lest they might become unclean by the contact,—they were not distinguished by any striking regard for justice or fair dealing. Rather, indeed, they appeared to consider all other peoples as enemies whom it was lawful to spoil.

Such was the aspect under which they presented themselves to the nations among which they dwelt. Some enquirers might be aware that they possessed a sacred literature with considerable claims to antiquity, through which were scattered many sublime thoughts and admirable precepts, based upon a strictly

monotheistic creed. These men, however, were comparatively few. Most of those who knew them were satisfied to judge of the tree by its fruits ; and, seeing the bigotry, exclusiveness, and unscrupulousness of the people, pronounced the religion which led to such results to be “an execrable superstition.” And if our opinions of the Jews, and of their faith, were drawn entirely from the books of the New Testament, instead of being tinged by impressions derived from the prescriptive sacredness of those of the Old, and, in some degree also by our intercourse with them, we should probably entertain very similar feelings ; such as were, in fact, entertained towards them during the whole of the Middle Ages. It was however, of this people that Jesus was born ;—among them he grew up; in their schools he was taught; to them he preached; and from them he selected his followers and friends. It was a Jew, too, that first gave to Christianity the form that enabled it to transcend the limits of Judaism, and to become the basis of the religion of civilized humanity. Something, therefore, then must have been in the character of the people, in their belief and their aspirations, that answered to the teaching of Jesus, and with which it could harmonize—something out of which it sprung or upon which it could be grafted. An enquiry into the condition of the Jewish people, their practices, beliefs, and opinions, is therefore a fitting, if not a necessary, preliminary to any attempt to portray his life.

The origin of the Jews is involved in obscurity ; and the very circumstance that we possess, apparently, a clear and connected narrative tracing their descent, without a break, from the common ancestor of the human race, only renders the obscurity the more impenetrable. That there were individuals known in the oldest legends of Canaan, bearing the names of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, is possible—perhaps, on the whole, probable. But the accounts we possess of their life are, from the historical point of view, upon precisely the same level as those of the siege of Thebes or of Troy. The story is

equally marvellous, and the authority equally unreliable. Even if we were to assume, in defiance of evidence, that the book of Genesis was originally composed by Moses, it would still be written from 300 to 400 years after the event, and in another land, and entirely uncorroborated. And if, as is more probable, the earliest part was written about the time of Samuel, it would stand in the same relation to the early history of Palestine and of the Hebrews, as the Chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth to the early history of England ; at the utmost, it could only be accepted as the opinion that the writer entertained, or that he was desirous that his readers should entertain as to their ancestors, and especially as to the relation that had subsisted between them and the national God.¹

Looking at the Jews themselves, it is difficult not to be struck with their resemblance to the Egyptians of the monuments.² This permanence of physical resemblance implies a large proportion of Egyptian ancestry, if not an original Egyptian stock. It is impossible in this matter to rise above conjecture, for the story professed to be cited from the Egyptian Annals, by Manetho,³ is not a whit more entitled to credit than that which is adopted by Josephus, or that which we find in the Pentateuch. It is not impossible that the Hebrews⁴ were originally an Egyptian colony, driven out in some civil war, or perhaps by some foreign ruler ; who fought their way into Canaan, and,

¹ This does not, of course, affect the faith of those who regard every word of the Bible as supernaturally inspired. To them, of course, it is indifferent whether the book in question was written by Moses, or Samuel, or Ezra, since they believe it on the faith of the divine author and not of the human amanuensis. And it does not touch the arguments of those who assume that Abraham committed the events of his life to writing, and handed the work to Isaac, who continued the chronicle and handed it to Jacob, etc. If any reasoner is allowed to make a sufficient number of arbitrary assumptions, there are very few propositions that cannot be proved. It is enough to say that none of the assumptions that have been made to shew, not the actual, but the possible authenticity of the history, have any foundation in the work itself.

² This is pointed out by Dr. Knox, in his "Races of Man." I had, however, made the remark long before I had read that work, or knew that any one else had observed it.

³ Josephus against Apion.

⁴ Hebrews = yonderers—*i.e.* persons from beyond the Jordan ; altogether unconnected with the Eponym Eber.

when they had raised themselves to power, sought to legitimate their rule by connecting themselves with the traditions of the land. It is, however, more consistent with the form that the legend ultimately assumed, to suppose that a subject tribe, long connected by intermarriage with its Egyptian rulers, had revolted, and, unable to maintain its independence, had emigrated in search of a new home, and had penetrated into Canaan—from which, possibly, its ancestors had been derived. Whatever hypothesis we may prefer, it is at least certain that the pretensions of the Jews to pure Abrahamic descent is proved to be unfounded by the surest of all ethnological tests—the unmistakable resemblance they continue to bear to the Egyptians of the second empire. And it is very probable that the peculiarities by which they were distinguished from the Semitic tribes, among whom they established themselves, were attributable, in a great degree, to this difference of origin.

We have no sufficient means of tracing the religious development of the Hebrews;—if only because it is impossible to determine what changes were made in their sacred books in their transmission to the times of Ezra.¹ There are abundant indications that, by the earliest writers, Jehovah was looked upon as only one among many gods, more powerful, perhaps, than any, but not the only god. The characteristic speech put into the mouth of Jacob, in which he bargains to take Jehovah for his God, and to give him the tenth of his substance in return for protection to be afforded,² is similar to that which a modern Romanist, more devout than instructed, might address to his favourite saint, and implies, unmistakably, that Jacob was supposed to have a choice of gods, and that he conferred a favour upon the one that he selected; and the speech attributed

¹ “The books of the Hebrew part of Scripture have all in some way been reduced to a kind of uniformity, considerably veiling the difference of both style and language which must have existed at first—differences, for instance between the utterances of Noah, Abraham, or Balaam, and those of Solomon, or Malachi,” etc.—“The Bible and its Interpreters,” by W. J. Irons, D.D., cited in Colenso’s Natal Sermons.

² Gen. xxviii.; 20 *et seq.*

to Moses, when interceding with Jehovah for the people, “what will the Egyptians say?”¹ exhibits similar ideas with regard to his nature and motives. Mixed with these and many similar passages, however, are others implying worthier views of the Godhead, such indeed as the most spiritual worshippers are still able to employ; but on that account obviously owing their presence in the book to another and a later hand. It is impossible that the same person, almost that two persons, of the same age and circle, should entertain views of the deity so different and even repugnant.² And apart from the improbability that any later writer should have interpolated in an existing sacred narrative, passages expressing the lower ideas of the divine nature, the context proves that these formed a part of the original story.

The conduct, both of Samuel and David, proves, too, the prevalence of low moral views with regard to the character of the God they worshipped. Both are represented as offering human sacrifices to him—the former in the case of Agag, and the latter in that of the grandchildren of Saul. The inevitable inference is, that the loftier and purer conceptions of the character of Jehovah that are found in the earlier writings are of comparatively recent insertion.

At a time when the art of writing was confined to a class, and when the materials of which books were formed were frail, like the papyrus rolls, frequent transcriptions might be required, and there would be no security in the multiplicity of copies against alterations or interpolations. The copyist who transcribed a leaf to be inserted in the place of one that was worn or broken would have no check to prevent him from altering or adding a phrase. And the later reader, who was struck with

¹ Exod. xxxii., 12.

² It is true that modern Christians accept all of these representations alike, and even refuse to see any inconsistency in them. This is, however, due in part to the influence of habit blinding them to the contradiction, and, in part, to their investing the lower views with associations derived from the more elevated. And neither of these influences could apply to the original writer.

anything repugnant to his altered sentiment, would be able, without risk of detection, to obliterate or to insert a passage. That there have been interpolations in the books of the Pentateuch, or that additions have been subsequently made to them, is admitted by every one who has investigated the subject. It is impossible to say how far these have extended; and even if this could be approximately determined, we should still be unable to discover the omissions or changes that have been made for the purpose of rendering the work more nearly consistent with the views of subsequent generations. After the time of Nehemiah, when copies began to be required for the use of the synagogues, their multiplication, and the greater sacredness attached to the text, would prevent this,—and then mystical or allegorical interpretations would be employed for the same purpose. So long, however, as only one or two copies existed in the custody of the priests, the more easy and natural course would be to correct the work itself, by altering or erasing a phrase, or by inserting the requisite correction in any new copy, or as a gloss in the margin of the old.

An illustration of this method may be found in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. This, while in most particulars accurately representing the Hebrew text, as we may suppose it to have been possessed by the translators, uniformly translates the accounts of the various appearances of Elohim or Jehovah in such a manner as to exclude the idea that God could ever have been corporeally visible to man. This change was certainly dictated by feelings of reverence. The translators, from their residence in a Greek city, and their familiarity with Greek modes of thought, had learned so to conceive of God as to render the representations with which their brethren in Palestine were still satisfied, inadequate or derogatory. They accordingly modified their translation in accordance with these views, and somewhat in the same way analogous feelings on the part of previous transcribers might have led them to make corresponding changes in their copies.

Whatever opinion may be formed as to the date or authorship of the Pentateuch, it would seem certain that the laws attributed to Moses were unknown or disregarded by the bulk of the people. It is impossible, for instance, that if the Sabbath of the fourth commandment had been recognized as a divine institution from the time of the Exodus, no single hint of its existence would have occurred in all the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament down to the time of Isaiah. After the return from the Captivity, or rather after the establishment of the new order of things under Ezra and Nehemiah, the observance of the Sabbath is a prominent subject. In their business, in their worship, in their wars, in their intercourse with the Gentiles, its influence is apparent. It is impossible to read the history of the wars of the Jews in the Maccabees, or in Josephus, or to refer to the notices of them in classical writers, without seeing that the existence of this custom sensibly affected their policy and their relations with strangers. And if it had existed in the same form and with the same assumed sanction previous to the Captivity, it must have left some trace upon the history; unless, indeed, any one is prepared to assume a perpetual miraculous interposition to prevent any interruption to business or war in consequence of its observance.¹ We may conclude, indeed, that the seventh day was a day of sacrifice, and therefore a holiday,—a day of rest and recreation among the Hebrews; but it is clear that it was not required to be observed, nor was it observed, in fact, in the spirit of the fourth commandment, during the period of the monarchy as it was

¹ It has been said in answer to this that there is a like omission of any reference to circumcision, which, nevertheless, no one doubts was a Hebrew rite. This argument, even if well founded in fact, would bear little weight, since circumcision was a rite performed once for all, and not affecting in any way the incidents of public or private business. But there is a very significant reference to it in a story whose grossness vouches for the antiquity of the legend in which it is preserved. David, in order to gain his wife, brings to Saul two hundred foreskins of Philistines, who were, probably, a non-Semitic, and certainly an uncircumcised race. The part of the body selected instead of the ears or the head, distinguished them from the circumcised Israelite, and was a conclusive proof of the nationality of the victims. And there are other incidental references to the custom.

after the Captivity. Either, therefore, the Pentateuch did not exist in its present form, or it was not known to the people, or was not regarded as authoritative.

In the uncertainty that attends the subject, we can only say that the writings of the prophets and psalmists from Joel to Jeremiah, and from the times of David to those of the Captivity, serve to shew a gradual disentangling of the more worthy views of the Deity that ultimately prevailed from the narrow and human conceptions by which they had been previously obscured. Whether this was the restoration of a belief originally held, but subsequently lost or corrupted, or the result of a process of development in the revelation, or in individual minds, we need not now enquire. Presumably it was the latter. But it never, so far as we can judge, penetrated the popular mind, even in the kingdom of Judah, and it had no appreciable existence in the kingdom of Israel. The prophets, with some exceptions, had to struggle, not only against the inertness of the people, but against the open or tacit opposition of the priests. And at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the prophetic office typified by Jeremiah, in the depths of its despair arising from this indifference or hostility, could hold out no prospect of divine aid, even upon the terms of submission to Jehovah, and could proffer no counsels but those of abasement and submission. We may believe, however, that the exiles transported to Babylon carried with them their sacred writings —the Books of the Law, the Psalms, and the earlier prophets; and, possibly, the Chronicles, which at a later period formed the sources from which the author of the four books of Kings drew his materials. The captive Jews appear to have preserved, to some extent, their national unity, and to have been faithful to their national God. And they cherished the hope of being not merely restored to their native land, but of re-establishing their kingdom in more than its early splendour. When, therefore, the growing power of Cyrus threatened the existence of the Babylonian empire, they were prepared to welcome and, no

doubt, to assist the conqueror, in whom they hoped to find their destined liberator and avenger. It is by no means improbable that the favour with which they appear to have been regarded by Cyrus was purchased by information supplied or services rendered, during the siege of Babylon, or during the course of the earlier campaigns. However this may be, one of his earliest measures, after the conquest of Babylon, was the establishment of a Jewish settlement at Jerusalem, under the government of a scion of the House of David.

With what hopes the returning people entered upon their journey we may gather from the glowing pages of the Deutero-Isaiah. The offered restoration to their own land was to be the first step in the onward progress of the nation. It was at once a proof that Jehovah had not forgotten his people, and a pledge that he would abundantly fulfil every hope that he had allowed them to cherish. The nation had been guilty of the sin of rebellion against its God ;—but the rebellion had terminated and its sin had been forgiven. Jehovah had humbled the pride of the oppressor ; he had overthrown those who trusted in their idols to deliver them ; he had called Cyrus to the work, and had gifted him with the needful power for its accomplishment. He would smooth the way for the return of his people ; would turn the hearts of their enemies, and would even remove the obstacles to their journey presented by the mountain and the desert. And when they were once more established in their native land ; when they had restored Jerusalem, and had rebuilt the Temple, and had raised again the waste cities of Judah,—they were to enjoy a long course of peaceful prosperity as the holy and righteous worshippers of the God of Israel, receiving the willing and unforced tribute of the surrounding nations.

It is, however, observable that through these sanguine anticipations there runs an undertone of doubt and upbraiding. We might conjecture that there was something in the character and circumstances of the people that forbade even the prophet himself to expect the complete fulfilment of his own predictions ;

suggesting the idea that there was a disposition among the Jews, the majority of whom had been born in exile, rather to cling to the land of their birth than to risk the certain discomfort and probable danger of the offered return: some apparently urged the fate that had befallen their fathers—the destruction of the holy city—the pollution of the Temple and the desolation of the land—as a proof that Jehovah had cast off his ancient people; or, possibly, that he was powerless to protect them. In opposition to the former of these objections, the prophet argues that the sufferings of their fathers was only a temporary punishment for forsaking the law of Jehovah, and to the latter he sets forth Jehovah as the one true God—the creator and ruler of all things, whose power no earthly potentate can resist, and whose purposes are accomplished by the very means employed to oppose them. These indications, however, taken in connection with the fact that only a small portion of the people did return to Judaea when the way was opened to them by the decree of Cyrus, may be accepted as a proof that the expectations to which we have referred prevailed only among the minority, and that the greater number were satisfied to worship Jehovah in peace in the land in which their lot was cast. They might look with interest on the experiment. Many might have a languid expectation that Jehovah would really do all that was promised in his name, in which case they also would be willing to return. But the majority appear to have held themselves aloof from the movement.

Our notices of the condition of the returned exiles are scanty in the extreme; but we are able to gather that the first outburst of patriotic fervour was unable to support them against the discouragements of their actual position. They reached Jerusalem under the guidance of a descendant of David, but none of the promised marvels greeted their arrival. They encountered the ordinary difficulties of settlers in an unoccupied country, aggravated by the hostility of their neighbours, whose offers of assistance they had repelled, and it would seem by a

change of policy in their Persian rulers.¹ And all of these difficulties were allowed to operate without calling forth any supernatural intervention. Their neighbours, whose friendship they had scorned, repaid their rejection with hostility, and were able to throw unexpected obstacles in the way of their rebuilding the City and the Temple; but the arm of Jehovah was not made bare.² They still had to eat their bread in the sweat of their brow; still the uncultured land produced the brier and the thistle, and only by the slow and toilsome labours of the husbandman was made to yield any useful product. And it would seem that in proportion as these results were realized, so the first flush of hope and enthusiasm died out, and was succeeded by practical if more mundane aspirations. The necessity of providing for their own shelter and sustenance absorbed their attention; and even after these were provided for, the majority appear to have been solicitous, rather for their own comfort and aggrandizement, than for the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of its worship.

Such, at least, is the impression we receive from the last chapters of Isaiah, and from the writings of Haggai and Zechariah. There is, however, great doubt how far we are entitled to rely upon these representations. The pictures drawn of contemporary society by an enthusiastic or ascetic preacher require almost invariably to be accepted with considerable deductions. To the mendicant monk, the common life of humanity—with its unselfish domestic charities, its regulated

¹ Possibly, consequent upon the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses. The act of Cyrus in permitting the return may have been prompted by a feeling that it would be desirable to have a fortified town manued by zealous allies on the Egyptian frontier; and the subsequent difficulties may have arisen from the unwillingness of his successor to permit the existence of a stronghold in that place, when the original motive for its erection had ceased.

² May it not be, however, that the first six verses in the lxiii. chapter of Isaiah refer to some signal success of a small body of Israelites against a party of enemies, that was assumed by the prophet to have been such a manifestation? We have no hint of such an occurrence elsewhere, but that scarcely forms an argument against this view. This would not, however, affect the general accuracy of the picture drawn in the text.

toil, its innocent enjoyment, and its projects for the immediate future—may appear only the exhibition of a godless indifference. He may honestly denounce it as “earthly, sensual, and devilish.” Absorbed in the contemplation of the future world, and seeing in the pursuits and affections of this life only so many inducements and avenues to sin, if not so many actual sins, he may depict society truly enough from his stand-point, though the description would appear false or distorted to the ordinary observer; and something of this kind may have been the case with the returned Israelites. Their offence may only have been that they could not be persuaded to postpone the necessary provision for the shelter and support of themselves and families until after the Temple was rebuilt; and that they made a less liberal provision for the support of the Priests and Levites than these last considered their due.

There is, however, a great obscurity hanging over the circumstances of the return from the Captivity, and over the history of the settlers in Jerusalem down to the time of Nehemiah. It would seem that the prolonged delay in the fulfilment of their expectations, combined with their own conscious weakness, and the neglect they experienced, had led them to regret their first rejection of the proffered assistance of their neighbours, and that the similarity of their circumstances had tended gradually to promote an alliance between them. This was, perhaps, natural. But what appears singular is that they should be represented as having rebuilt the temple and restored the worship of Jehovah, and yet as being ignorant of the prohibition against marriages with the Ammonite and the Moabite, and even of the command to observe the Sabbath day. The account given in the book of Nehemiah implies that their laxity of practice was the result of want of knowledge, and not of wilful disobedience. As soon as the Law was read and expounded to them they were prepared to obey it, even, if we may accept the book of Ezra as an authority, at the cost of sacrificing the foreign wives, whom they had married in

ignorance of its prohibition. This account lends great probability to the later Jewish tradition, that the Law was not known after the Captivity until promulgated by Ezra. We need not, however, suppose with them that it was miraculously revealed to him in its original form, nor with some modern critics that the greater portion of its contents is due to him. The more probable inference would be that he had collected its various parts from his fellow-countrymen in the east, had re-copied them, and had then set out for Jerusalem to teach the lessons he had learned, and to reform the practices which, in the absence of any authoritative rule, were then prevailing.¹ In this task he was successful, owing, in a great degree, to the assistance he received from Nehemiah. And from this time the Jews, for by that name are they henceforth known, appear to have had a copy of the Law, much as we now possess it, and to have endeavoured to regulate their policy and worship in accordance with its requirements.

The most important element in the faith of the Jewish people—that which gave consistency and strength to their convictions—was, however, something outside the law. It was the expectation of a Messiah—an anointed King—a descendant of David—who would restore the ancient glories of the kingdom of Israel upon a wider scale, and would not only enable them to dwell in peace and prosperity within their own land, but would give them dominion over their ancient oppressors. This idea may be traced, at least in the germ, to

¹ This, however, does not exclude many corrections and additions, or the restoration from memory (or invention) of parts that were fragmentary or imperfect. Possibly the reduction to “a kind of uniformity,” of which Dr. Irons speaks, is due to him. The recent investigations of Bishop Colenso would seem to shew that, at least, the narrative portions of the Pentateuch had assumed substantially their present form before the exile; and, probably, this conclusion may, for the present, be regarded as established. It is, however, difficult not to suspect the influence of Persian ideas in the second account of the Creation—the Garden and the Trees of Life and of Knowledge, and the Serpent. The emphatic references to Jerusalem may have been prompted by a desire to counteract the tendency of the Jews to regard Babylon as their home. A recent notice of Kalisch’s work on Leviticus states that he attributes a large portion of that work to a time after the Captivity.

the earliest prophetical utterances, and it gradually assumed greater elevation and distinctness as one prophet after another took up the prediction, and applied it to the king in whose reign he lived, or to his youthful heir. It was, apparently, derived, in the first place, from the language of the Psalms, composed in honour of David and of Solomon, at a time when the kingdom of Israel appeared to be securely established, and everything prognosticated a long continuance of peace and prosperity. These hopes were, however, checked by the reverses that Solomon experienced in the last years of his reign, and were crushed for the time by the successful revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam. But the people of Judah never forgot that they had been the ruling tribe during the only really glorious period of the national history, and that Jerusalem was at the same time the capital of the united kingdom, and its temple the centre of the national worship. And some among them always looked forward to the ultimate re-establishment of (as they considered) their rightful dominion over all Israel. And the prophets who shared these hopes endeavoured to avail themselves of the national feeling to enforce the claims of Jehovah, since only by his help could they be fulfilled; and a pure and righteous worship was the only condition upon which that help would be afforded.

Upon this condition, however, they promised not only the re-establishment of the sovereignty of David, in the person of his descendants, over the whole people of Israel, but that it should include all the various nations with whom the Israelites had been brought into contact, and at whose hands they had suffered. In this renovated kingdom the enmity still subsisting between Ephraim and Judah should be healed. Ephraim should not envy Judah, and Judah should not vex Ephraim; but they should rule over the Philistine on the west, and should spoil those of the east: Edom and Moab and Ammon should be subject to them, and Egypt and Assyria should be rendered powerless to harm them. And beside this, all injustice and

oppression should terminate, and all hurtful things should lose their power to injure, and the knowledge of Jehovah should be diffused over the earth, and all Gentiles should come, attracted by the spectacle of prosperity and righteousness.¹ Such, with occasional variations, is the general idea of the Messianic kingdom that we derive from the writers who lived before the Captivity. The character of the predictions, so far as other nations are concerned,—those, at least, who had injured the Israelites,—is, for the most part, vindictive and threatening; yet, even here, there is sometimes a recollection that these nations also are children of Jehovah, and they are permitted to share in the promised blessings.²

We have, however, no reason to suppose that previous to the Captivity the views of the prophets were shared by the people. It is difficult to escape from this illusion, but a careful examination shews that the men who uttered these prophecies stood, for the most part, aloof from the nation. The populace had no sympathy with them; they were scarcely aware of their predictions, and if they had known them would have repudiated the conditions with which they were connected, since they resisted all the attempts that were made to reform their worship in accordance with the views of the prophets. And—with the exception of Hezekiah, who called Isaiah to his councils, and of Josiah, who appears in the early part of his reign to have acted under prophetical advice—the rulers seem to have believed in them as little as the people. They, in fact, were too much occupied in maintaining their position against the rival monarchy of Israel, aided occasionally by that of Syria, to listen to men who would have had them rely entirely upon supernatural aid; and they so far shared the feelings of the people as to refuse to sanction those innovations in the popular worship which the prophets sought to introduce. And if, for a moment, during the reign of Josiah the pure worship of Jehovah was established,—and it appeared as though the half-

¹ Isaiah xi.

² Isaiah xix., 21 *et seq.*

deserted realm of Israel might be incorporated in the kingdom of Judah,—this hope was destroyed almost as soon as it arose, not less by the reaction necessarily provoked by the bloody persecutions of Josiah,¹ than by the impossibility that his kingdom should maintain its independence in presence of the rival monarchies of Egypt and Babylon. We see, however, in the prophecies of Jeremiah that the old hopes still subsisted, in spite of reiterated failures. The line of David and the services of the Temple were to be perpetual.² A shoot from the stem of David should be raised up who would rule in justice and in peace over the restored children of Israel and Judah, whom Jehovah would soon call from all the countries to which he had driven them; for the time was at hand in which the promises of the Lord were to be fulfilled;³ and these hopes appear to have continued even to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Captivity of Judah.

During the period of the exile, a portion of the captives continued to maintain their faith in these predictions, which were supposed at first to be about to receive their fulfilment in the return under Zerubbabel. At this period they found their loftiest and most spiritual expression in the evangelical utterances of the Deutero-Isaiah, and they inspired the prophecies of Haggai and Zachariah. As, however, time wore on, and there was no sign of their fulfilment, and the Jews gradually realized the true nature of their position, the faith they had once excited died out, and the feelings they had prompted slowly faded away. There is not a trace of their existence in the pages of Ezra and Nehemiah; and Malachi, who probably wrote before their time, no longer anticipates the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, but only the religious

¹ It can excite no surprise that the spirit of persecution for conscience sake should be so prevalent in Protestant countries, when Josiah, who sacrificed the priests of Baal upon their own altars, for no offence but their erroneous religious practices, is always presented to young people as a model of early piety, and emphatically as “the good king Josiah.”

² Jerem. xxxiii., 17, 18.

³ Jerem. xxiii., 5-8; xxxiii., 14 *et seq.*

reform of the people and the purification of the worship of Jehovah.

Possibly, indeed, the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah were in substance a reaction of the priestly against the prophetical party ; or, perhaps, they might be more accurately described as the occupation by the priestly party of a field that had been left vacant in consequence of the entire collapse of the prophetical spirit, resulting from the proved failure of the hopes by which it had been animated. It was impossible that the faith in Jehovah as the restorer of Israel could maintain itself in its original fervour in spite of the wearing delay in the fulfilment of his declared purpose, and, as it would seem, of its ultimate relinquishment. A few enthusiasts might preserve their faith, and (like our modern interpreters of prophecy) might be able to suggest new views of the meaning of the predictions, as events demonstrated the falsity of the old. But the majority would feel only that they had been fed with false hopes, and would refuse to believe in any new interpretation ; and out of this would arise a feeling of listlessness and indifference, and of impatience of restraint. It may even be true that the returned Jews had not carried with them any copy of the book of the law, for the prophets in general attached little importance to its formal precepts, and, indeed, disparaged them in comparison with justice and spiritual holiness ; and in the enthusiasm excited by the belief that Jehovah was about to establish his visible reign among them in the person of his anointed, it might be supposed that these ritual observances would be no longer required. Whatever might have been their knowledge, it would appear that the distinctive practices that had divided them from the other people of the land were gradually becoming obsolete, and that they scarcely cared to preserve their separate existence. Intelligence of this state of things reached their brethren in Persia, who, in their exile, seem always to have looked to Jerusalem as the holy city, and to Judæa as their country ;

and energetic measures were at once taken to reform this laxity of practice, and to establish the Levitical law in Jerusalem, in all or more than all its original strictness; measures which, owing to the high position of Nehemiah, and the zeal and ability of Ezra, were completely and permanently successful.

In the period that elapsed between the government of Nehemiah and the fall of the Persian empire nothing occurred to re-awaken the Messianic hopes. The Jews appear to have lived in peace under their foreign rulers, who, monotheists¹ and iconoclasts themselves, regarded them with favour, and made no attempt to interfere with their faith or worship. Nor was their position sensibly altered by the conquest of Alexander during his lifetime. When, however, his death left the empire he had founded to be shared among his generals, as the skill of the competitor and the fortune of the sword might determine, Judæa—placed between the kingdoms of the Ptolemies and the Seleucides, claimed as an appanage by each, and alternately the battle ground upon which their armies encountered, and the road along which they marched to conflict—was ultimately reduced to a condition of misery, that probably equalled anything they had before suffered at the hand of Assyrian or Babylonian. With this present suffering came also a revival of their anticipations of future prosperity and triumph, through the help of Jehovah. And when the attempts of Antiochus Epiphanes to suppress the worship of the Lord, and to substitute that of Olympian Jove had provoked a rebellion, those anticipations found their practical expressions in the efforts of the Maccabees, and their literary expressions in the book of Daniel,—a work which profoundly modified the nature of the Messianic ideas. The struggle upon which the nation entered, however, though it seemed

¹ It is said that they were dualists—but they believed in the ultimate triumph of the good principle, and they certainly did not attribute as much power to Ahremain as was attributed by Scotish divines of the seventeenth century to Satan; and these latter would have been surprised to hear their monotheism doubted.

for the time the national religion, did not establish national independence; and, after a few years of turbulent freedom, Judæa fell, with the rest of the kingdom of the Seleucidae, under the power of Rome. Its separate existence, however, continued, first as a subject kingdom under Herod and his successors, and afterwards as a province under Roman governors until the final destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

The book of Daniel can scarcely be called Messianic. No doubt the word Messiah or Anointed occurs twice in two consecutive verses, and there is once a reference to anointing some holy thing or place—probably the Temple;¹ but the word is, in both instances, so employed as to exclude its application to the predicted ruler over Israel. It is no longer the shoot or branch of the stem of David that is to rule. There is not even to be a king. These ideas had lost their appropriateness during the centuries of subjection that had elapsed since the Captivity, or, perhaps the defection of nearly all of the higher ranks—priests and nobles—from the cause of Jehovah² had rendered the idea of the restoration of the kingdom of David, with its inevitable adjuncts, repugnant to the feelings of the prophet. His imagery in this respect, however, is inconsistent and varying. Now it is the Ancient of Days that will sit in judgment, and will slay the beast and give his body to the flames (Dan. vii., 9 *et seq.*) Now it is one like to the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven, who is brought near to the Ancient of Days, and to whom is given dominion and glory and a kingdom—a kingdom that is everlasting, and a dominion that rules over all men (13). Then the holy ones of the most High (=the Jewish people) shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever (18); then, again, the Ancient of Days comes, and the judgment is given to the holy ones, and they possess the

¹ Dan. ix., 24, 25, 26. Davidson Introd. to Old Test., Vol. iii., 213 *et seq.*

² Reminding one of Spain during the invasion of Napoleon—

“Where all was noble save nobility,
None kissed the tyrant’s feet but fallen chivalry.”

kingdom (22); and, again, the kingdom shall be given to the holy people of the most High (27); and then, again, instead of the Ancient of Days, or one like to the Son of Man, or the holy people of the most High, it is Michael, the great prince, that standeth for the Jewish nation, who shall stand up, and they shall be delivered, those at least who shall be found written in the book. And more than this, many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (xii., 1, 2). The unfixed character of the imagery indicates the novelty of the ideas which had not yet been clothed in any definite form. The prevailing sentiment, however, is, that the people of Israel, who then, deserted by their natural leaders, were battling for the cause of Jehovah, should rule either under God himself or under some supernatural messenger, whether one like to the Son of Man, or Michael, the prince or angel of the Jews.

These, however, are ideas of which there is scarcely a trace in the other books of the Old Testament: only in those of the New do we perceive their influence; and in these latter we find that a belief was entertained by the Jews (except the Sadducees) in one like to the Son of Man, who is to come in the clouds of heaven, and in the resurrection, and in the judgment,—blended, however, with the Messianic imagery of the prophets.

The distinctive feature in the organization of the Jews at the time of the birth of Jesus was, as it has continued to be since, the Synagogue. It is true that the Temple still subsisted—that the daily sacrifice was still offered, and that at intervals, dependent, in some degree, upon their own proximity to Jerusalem, the Jews went up to worship according to the law. But excepting for those who dwelt in the holy city, and, perhaps, even for these also, the influence of the Temple was insignificant in comparison with that of the Synagogue. In the latter, every week, upon the Sabbath day, they assembled to hear the law and the prophets read and expounded. Their social rank was connected with, or was indicated by, their position in its

services. The performance of the innumerable observances that surrounded their daily life, and entered into the commonest actions, was connected with this establishment, and watched over by its office-bearers. It was thus the centre, both of their religious and social life, if we may employ such a phraseology. The distinction, however, would at the time have been without meaning to the Jews, for with them every social act and relation had a religious aspect and character. It subsisted, too, not only in Palestine, but had been carried by the Jews into every country and place in which they had established themselves; and, independent of the Temple, it has survived its ruin.

This involved two consequences—a comparative disregard of the Temple worship, and a special importance attached to the letter of the law. Undoubtedly those who established the synagogue did not anticipate the former of these results. It was, however, inevitable that the synagogue, with its weekly meetings and the influence it exercised over their daily life, should gradually acquire a preponderating importance in the minds of the people over the distant or infrequent celebrations of the Temple; and as the principal part of its service consisted in the reading and interpretation of the law, and in exhortations founded upon it, the books thus read necessarily acquired a peculiar sacredness, and came to be regarded as the sole and infallible guide in all matters.

The books of the law were, however, written in view of a different state of society; and, in order to allow of their application to the actual circumstances of the people, some means of adaptation were necessary. It was impossible that the Jews should have passed through all their various experiences, from the times of Ezra to those of Herod, without having acquired many new ideas, and having profoundly modified those that they had retained. They had been in contact with their Persian rulers up to the time of Alexander,¹ and afterwards

¹ The influence of Persian ideas is especially visible in the eschatology of the book of Daniel.

they had been exposed to the influence of Greek modes of thought; and however resolute they might be in intention to repel all intrusion of new ideas from either source, it was impossible they could wholly escape them, any more than the modern theological opponents of science can avoid being affected by the indirect results of the studies they condemn.¹ And notwithstanding the hostility with which Greek literature and philosophy were regarded, at any rate after the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the religious ideas of the Jews appear to have been, to some extent, tinged by them; probably without their being conscious of the effect, or of the source from which the influence proceeded.

This, however, is a question we need not discuss. To whatever extent Greek ideas might have penetrated into the schools of Jerusalem, or been favoured by the ruling classes, there is no reason to believe that they exercised any perceptible influence upon the class to which Jesus belonged, and to which he preached. Among them the changed aspect of the law related rather to practical matters, and to the methods of interpretation employed by the Scribes to adapt it to the requirements of their daily life. In order to do this, it was the custom to have recourse to strained methods of construction; and when these failed, an ingenious system of casuistry was devised, to teach in what manner inconvenient or impracticable obligations might be evaded. And, as always happens, when attention is concentrated upon the letter of the Scripture—as though that were essentially sacred—far more importance was attached to minute formal matters than to the broad principles upon which it was based. Whenever the alternative lay between violating the letter and disregarding the spirit of the law, the question was

¹ I have, however, heard of a German Lutheran minister, in one of the Colonies, who, as late as 1859, told his congregation that he believed the sun revolved round the earth, and that he should teach them so, giving as his reason, that this appeared to be the plain doctrine of the Bible, and that if he gave way to philosophers upon this point, he did not know where he could stop. But he must have been a rare exception, and, probably, was not consistent throughout.

sure to be decided in favour of literal observance ; and, coupled with this, was a strange laxity that permitted its plainest precepts, when found burdensome, to be evaded upon certain definite technical excuses.¹ An illustration of the importance attached to the letter may be found in the tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin ; and of the evasions, in the permitted excuse for not contributing to the support of a parent on the ground that the requisite means were “ corban ”—dedicated to a religious use.

The rules for the interpretation and application of the law formed a body of doctrines taught in the schools of the doctors of the law. With them—in the New Testament narratives called Scribes and Lawyers—were associated the Pharisees. These two formed the guides of the people, self-constituted, but almost universally accepted. They were looked up to for advice and direction in circumstances of difficulty, and their sincerity and earnestness justified, under certain aspects, the confidence reposed in them. They were faithful to the national traditions ; favouring, if they did not join, all the movements to resist threatened interference with the national faith. They were found in every part of the land, in Galilee as well as in Judæa, and they were especially identified with the services of the synagogue. They belonged to the people, in whose feelings they sympathized, and whose hopes they shared ; occupying in this respect a somewhat similar position to that of a parish priest in Ireland, at the close of the last century. The Pharisees, especially, appear to have affected great external sanctity, and to have been ostentatious in the performance of their religious duties, and in their precautions against cere-

¹ A person curious in tracing analogies might find some striking points of resemblance to the picture thus sketched in the English law of fifty years ago, when the common law made the enforcement of the rights of the party dependent upon matters of form, and the system of equity, introduced professedly to remedy the evils occasioned by this strictness, was as rigidly technical, and practically more unjust. Much, but not enough, has been done to reform these systems, principally because the administration of the new laws has, of necessity, been entrusted to men trained under the old.

monial impurity ; and, probably, they prided themselves upon their minute and scrupulous fulfilment of every legal requirement, and regarded those who fell short in this respect with something of the same feeling of inward superiority that a celibate priest might feel when contrasting himself with a married clergyman. But, however this might be, their own unswerving adherence to the rules they imposed secured for them the respect and confidence of the people, who saw in their practices a sincere, if possibly an overstrained, anxiety to fulfil everything that the law might be supposed to require.

An amusing sketch of the various classes into which they were divided, and of the peculiarities by which each class was distinguished, has been drawn by M. Renan, in his *Life of Jesus*. The practices, however, that are seen only in a ludicrous light by a Parisian of the nineteenth century, appeared, we may be sure, under a very different aspect to the contemporaries of Jesus. There is, in fact, nothing in which the influence of association is more powerful in excluding ludicrous or derogatory ideas than in practices supposed to be connected with religion. We laugh at the Puritans of the Commonwealth ; and it must be confessed that their uncouth phraseology, affected snuffle, and peculiar garb, furnish much matter for laughter. They, however, were earnest men, fearing God, and when they believed that they were doing His work, fearing little else ; and so long, at least, as they were oppressed, they were regarded with respect and sympathy by the greater part of the nation. The Dean of Canterbury, in a letter from Rome, describes a scene, ridiculous enough from a Protestant point of view, in which a number of grave men and respectable ladies reverently kissed the foot of a doll ; and yet we may be sure that the sentiments of the officiating priests and the worshipping people in this scene were those of devotion and reverence. It is not necessary to multiply instances. These may suffice to shew that the practices of the Pharisees might not only be regarded as exhibiting a zeal for God and a re-

verence for his law, but that they would place at a disadvantage any one who assumed the character of a public teacher without exhibiting these or analogous proofs of his sincerity and fitness.

Under these various influences the Jews were led to regard themselves as especially a holy people; or rather, as *the* holy people of the earth. They appropriated to themselves all the epithets of the prophet and the psalmist. They were *the* holy ones of the most High—the chosen of Jehovah,—a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. As such they had been selected by the God of the whole earth as the first recipients of his bounty, and they were to be the instruments by which it might be in a degree poured out upon the whole earth. They were Jacob, whom he had loved—Israel, whom he had chosen—the children of Abraham, his friend, with whom he had condescended to treat as an equal. They were heirs of the promises—children of the covenant that God had made with their fathers. What, if for a little while,—long though it had seemed to their waiting hearts,—Jehovah had hidden his face from them, they were still the only people to whom he had revealed himself—the one nation that he had covenanted to bless. Wherever they went they carried with them the conviction of this unapproachable superiority. Other nations might be more prosperous, or powerful, or wealthy, or learned, or warlike,—*they* were the people of God. Other nations might enjoy a transient superiority; but when the predetermined time should arrive *they* would at once and for ever assume the pre-eminence that of right belonged to them. Often must they have applied to themselves the language of the prophet—despised, rejected, afflicted. Without beauty or comeliness in the sight of the heathen; bearing the burthen of other nations, and suffering because of the offences of the Gentiles;—*they* looked forward to the time when kings should shut their mouths before them; when they should divide a portion with the great, and the spoil with the strong; when the pleasure of Jehovah should be fulfilled in their restoration; and when, though mountains should

depart and the hills be removed, his kindness should abide with them, and the covenant of his peace should never be broken.

We have been so long accustomed to give to these and similar passages an exclusively Christian interpretation that we are apt to forget they were originally addressed to the Jews, who, until enlightened by experience, were justified in applying them to their own circumstances. The common Christian view may be well founded; but certainly no one before the death of Jesus would have thought of applying the prophecies to the Gentiles as the spiritual Israel—the very persons at whose hands the Jews, the Israel after the flesh, had for centuries sustained so many and such grievous wrongs. It could not then have occurred to any one that the coming of the promised Messiah—the Son of David, the King of Zion—the Saviour of Israel, was to be to the Jews themselves the commencement of a period of degradation and suffering, longer and deeper than any they had previously undergone. The Romans were more remorseless conquerors than the Babylonians, and the Christians have been harder task-masters than the Egyptians; for while in their ancient captivity they are represented as having increased in an unprecedented ratio, it is a question whether, in the old world, there are at the present time as many Jews to the west of the Tigris as there were at the time of the first siege of Jerusalem. And even if we could now be quite certain that this was the true meaning of the prophets, the Jews would have been then justified in understanding them according to their apparent signification, and in appropriating to themselves their description and their promises.

The importance attached by the Jews to ceremonial observances, and the peculiar sacredness they attributed to themselves, necessarily tended to draw in their minds a clear and impassable line of demarcation between Jew and Gentile, which latter word included every one that was not a Jew. In matters of business they might, indeed, meet. In fact, throughout the Roman empire, the Jews were generally found wherever an

opening for trade presented itself; and everywhere they were among the keenest and most active of traffickers. In all other matters, however, they kept themselves rigidly separate. Not only did they refuse to share in religious rites;—they refrained from all social intercourse with Gentiles, neither accepting nor exercising hospitality. Everywhere out of Judæa they comported themselves as strangers and pilgrims, having no home but Jerusalem, and holding themselves ready at any moment to sever whatever ties might seemingly bind them to other places; or, if in some cities, as in Alexandria, hereditary association with men of another race had somewhat modified their antagonism, and had begun to relax the obstacles to intercommunion, those who had permitted themselves to yield to such influences were looked upon by their more orthodox brethren as little better than heretics or traitors. By other nations the Jews were viewed with dislike and contempt, mingled with that half-admiration that is extorted by the spectacle of men willing to sacrifice everything rather than violate even an absurd conviction. And they repaid these feelings with tenfold bitterness. The very term "Gentile" was a phrase of the deepest reproach, symbolizing whatever could repel and disgust. "Let him be to thee as a Gentile," was to justify the exclusion of the individual designated from social fellowship and religious communion, and to point him out as a fitting object of scorn and avoidance.

If such were the feelings with which the Gentiles were regarded in their own lands, in which the Jews confessed themselves to be strangers, and only indebted for permission to reside to the toleration of the State; much more was it the case in Palestine itself. There, in the sacred land, given by Jehovah to their fathers, the Gentiles were masters. In Judæa they ruled directly through a Roman procurator. In Galilee, indirectly, but not less really, through Herod. The last seeming vestiges of national independence were effaced when Augustus, upon the banishment of Archelaus, had made

Judæa a Roman province. From that time nothing disguised from the Jews the fact of their subjection. They were taxed for Gentile purposes—overawed by Gentile mercenaries; and the manner in which the power of their rulers was exercised deepened the animosity that their presence occasioned. Our only account of the story as between the Jews and their Roman governors—that from the pen of Josephus—gives us only one side of the picture, and that is obviously coloured by the feelings of the writer. But even if we had an equally detailed narrative from the Roman point of view, it would, in all probability, chiefly differ from that of Josephus by representing the acts of violence and cruelty alleged against Pilate as necessary acts of repression, provoked by the turbulence and sedition of the people; and, no doubt, this was the case. Enough appears in the pages of the Jewish historian¹ to shew the precarious tenure of the Roman authority,—that it avowedly rested upon military force, and that it was perpetually exposed to the risk of an armed resistance, whenever any seeming weakness of the garrison, or any anticipated interference with religious observances, might encourage or provoke a rising. In such a state of affairs the successive governors would necessarily feel that severe measures of coercion were needed—that lenity was misplaced, and that concession only tended to keep alive the feelings and the hopes that prompted to rebellion. Every act of resistance accordingly provoked a bloody retaliation; and this, again, only gave a keener edge to the hatred with which the Romans were regarded, and stimulated the ultimate resolve to dare and suffer everything in order to throw off the alien yoke; and this resolve was encouraged by the prevailing belief that the time for the manifestation of the Messiah was at hand, and that the sufferings of the people and the extinction of their independence were the signs that heralded his coming.

¹ It is, indeed, certain that Josephus suppresses a great part of the provocation given by the Jews. The account of the results of the revolt of Judas the Galilæan implies a great deal more of active disaffection than is described in the history.

Our sources of information, with regard to the actual character of these Messianic expectations, as with regard to so much else among the Jews, are scanty and imperfect. It appears probable, indeed almost certain, that during the life of Jesus, at least subsequent to the removal of Archelaus, and until the final revolt of Barchocheba, the majority of the Jews were looking for the immediate appearance of the promised Messiah, who should restore the kingdom to Israel. The precise nature of the expected Deliverer, and the manner in which he was to accomplish his mission were, probably, conceived of in a different manner by different individuals. The general impression, however, appears to have been that the Messiah was to be a Son of David, but that his final manifestation was to take place in accordance with the representation given in Daniel, and that it would follow, or accompany, a rising of the people against their foreign oppressors. He was to possess supernatural powers, and his appearance was to be supernatural; but he was to aid, not to supersede, the efforts of the Jews themselves—to give victory to their arms, not to dispense with their assistance. How much of the imagery of the prophet was expected to be literally realized, and how much was referred to the poetic dress in which prophecy was ordinarily clothed, or rather veiled, we are unable to determine. Probably, in anticipation, a literal fulfilment was looked for, though in practice they would be ready to accept some very prosaic realization. But the essential idea entertained by the majority of the nation, and to which the Jews clung until the people were almost extinguished together with the nationality, was that the Messiah should free them from foreign yoke by the instrumentality of the people themselves, aided either visibly or invisibly by his supernatural power—that he should exact a full measure of vengeance for any injury inflicted upon them, and that he should then, as King of the Jews, establish his kingdom upon the earth, setting up his throne in Jerusalem, and there receiving the willing homage of the remnant of the Gentiles. The form of the ex-

pectation, however, did not exclude the idea that the Deliverer should appear at first in some holy form, before the people should have risen against their oppressors, and that some glorious manifestation of his power was to be the signal for their rising ; or that a moral reformation of the nation itself should be the condition and sign of his appearing.

In the glories of this renovated kingdom, not merely those living at the time of its establishment, but those who had fallen in the wars that were to inaugurate the final triumph, were to share. And all of these last would be raised from the dead for the purpose. The doctrine of the resurrection, therefore, formed an essential part of the popular idea of the coming kingdom. In this resurrection the natural bodies of the departed just were to be restored to them, and they, thus reanimated, were to renew their human life and take their part in the enjoyments of the kingdom upon the same terms, in all respects, as those who had never died. As the kingdom was to be established on earth, though by one who would come in the clouds of heaven for the purpose, those who had been waiting for its coming, but had died before their aspirations were realized, and those who had fallen in premature efforts for its establishment, or in struggles to preserve the worship of Jehovah, or to resist the unhallowed rule of the Gentile, could by no other means receive the reward of their faith and their devotion. The resurrection of the natural body, with all its incidents, was therefore expected. The doctrine formed a prominent part of the teaching of the Pharisees, though it furnished to the sceptical Sadducees such grounds of objection as are intimated in the question reputed to have been put to Jesus as to the woman who had successively married seven brothers ; and those who had been thus raised were not to be translated into heaven, but to remain and reign on earth. They were to enter into the joy of their Lord—to inherit the kingdom prepared for them ; and that joy was the prosperity and abundance of their renovated land, and that kingdom was the rule of Jehovah, the covenant God of

Israel, in the person of his Anointed, over all the subjugated nations.

The party of the Pharisees did not, however, include the whole of the Jewish people. Independently of the Essenians, who lay altogether outside of the sphere of the ministry of Jesus, and whom, therefore, it is not necessary to describe, there was, in Jerusalem, at least, a conservative body—the Sadducees—who were uninfluenced by the Messianic expectations, and denied the doctrines upon which they were founded. They had been generally disposed to acquiesce in the existing order of things, and were willing, so long as the religious observances of the people were tolerated, and no attempt was made to compel a mode of worship inconsistent with the law, to yield a willing submission to the ruling power. In this they were, no doubt, influenced by feelings of expediency. They could not but feel the hopelessness of any attempt to throw off the Roman dominion, and they were reluctant to encounter the certain evils of an unsuccessful revolutionary war. Probably, too, they would have dreaded the anarchy that in their view must follow a successful rebellion more than the continuance of foreign rule. It may be presumed that they denied the authority of the prophetical books, and only admitted that of the Books of the law. Certainly they denied the resurrection of the dead. There is no reason to doubt that they were sincere believers in Jehovah, and zealous for the maintenance of His worship. Indeed, it was because of their adherence to the law, simply, that they rejected the doctrines connected with the appearance of the Messiah, and the writings upon which they were founded. They appear, also, to have rejected the "traditions of the Elders" as taught in the schools, and to have refused to be subject to all the minute regulations with which the Scribes had encrusted the original commandments. They were accordingly regarded by the multitude as sceptical and irreligious, and they owed their position and influence entirely to the authority of the foreign government. It would

appear that the unconcealed enmity of the people had produced a state of exasperation in their own minds that occasionally led them to acts of cruelty;¹ and that they were sometimes more vindictive and unforgiving than the Romans themselves. Their position was, in some respects, analogous to that of Orangemen, in Ireland, three quarters of a century since; and, like them, their zeal occasionally hurried them into excesses that were condemned, even by the power in whose name and on whose behalf they were ostensibly performed. The chief priests, and, apparently, the whole ruling body, belonged to this party. Their principal seat was Jerusalem; and we hear nothing of them in Galilee.

Such appears to have been the state of the Jewish people at the commencement of the public teaching of Jesus. The majority was chafing under the Roman yoke, and impatiently expecting the appearance of the promised Deliverer who should free them from its burthen—zealous for the law, but absorbed in questions of rite and ceremony;—accepting the Scribes and Pharisees for their teachers and guides, both in religion and politics;—possessed by the idea of their own peculiar holiness, and viewing the Gentiles with abhorrence;—ready at any moment, and almost on any pretext, to rise against their rulers, and gathering from every successive failure only an additional incitement to renewed efforts. Opposed to these was a small conservative party, insignificant in numbers, and without any weight with the people,—but powerful by means of the support of the foreign rulers whose pretensions they favoured. And over all was the Roman governor—nominated by the Emperor, and liable to be recalled at any moment, and having therefore no interest but to maintain tranquility, and carry out, by whatever means, the wishes of his master.

Any attempt to depict the condition of the Jewish people

¹ Such as the murder of James, the brother of Jesus. We, however, know their history only from Josephus, who belonged to the popular party, and from the New Testament, which is Messianic, excepting the fourth Gospel, and there they are not mentioned.

would be imperfect if it omitted the circumstance that their sacred books contained much to condemn the formalism of the Pharisees, as well as the materialism of the Sadducees; for they proclaimed that justice and mercy were religious services, higher and more efficacious than fasting and sacrifice. It was not by costly offerings,—thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil—that the favour of Jehovah could be secured. Such gifts were superfluous to one whose were all the beasts of the earth. It was not even the yet more costly sacrifice of the first-born (once required by the law); the fruit of the body, if offered, could not purchase pardon for the sins of the soul. The sacrifices that God required were sorrow for past and the avoidance of future sins. For the wicked to sacrifice while continuing in his wickedness was an abomination; and only to the man that did what was right could the Lord shew His salvation. The fast he had chosen was not to bow down the head and spread sackcloth and ashes, but to loosen the bands of wickedness; to undo the heavy burdens; to free the oppressed; to break the fetters of the slave; to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the outcast. Not the prosperous and the mighty were the objects of His favour, but the poor, the meek, the humble, the contrite—those who suffered because they did what was right. Prayer and praise even were as nothing—the voice of psalms and the melody of viols; that which Jehovah required at the hands of His people was that they should let judgment flow as a torrent, and justice as a mighty stream. And, finally, the whole is summed up in the one comprehensive rule:—to man, justice and mercy; and humility to God.

These, and many other similar lessons, were, no doubt, habitually forgotten or neglected. The position of the Jews was not favourable to the culture of the gentler virtues. Everything in their history, for more than a century, had tended to embitter their feelings to other nations. Their attention, consequently, was directed rather to the externals than to the

essentials of the law—to that which separated them from the world rather than to that which they and others might hold in common. But there must have been some among them who recognized the eternal force of these principles, and more, perhaps, who, almost without being aware of it, felt the unsatisfying nature of the merely formal routine of religious service in which they were required to engage. And, however few these may have been, the precepts themselves remained; a silent protest against the prevailing practices, and a potent instrument in the hands of any one who might base his teaching upon them.

CHAPTER II.

SOURCES OF THE LIFE OF JESUS.

THE materials for the life of Jesus are contained exclusively in the writings that now constitute the New Testament. Our first enquiry, therefore, must be as to the authority of these writings.

Amongst the earliest of these, probably the very earliest in point of date, are some letters of Paul—those to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans. The authenticity of these letters has scarcely ever been seriously questioned; and they contain important indications with regard to Paul himself, as well as to the manner in which he was accustomed to represent the history and character of Jesus. Their object is not historical, but controversial or hortatory. The various references to the life of Jesus are introduced incidentally, by way of illustrating an argument or enforcing a precept. We may, therefore, be certain that they were such as were familiar to his readers, either from his own personal teaching, or from the general teaching of the brethren. It may be well, consequently, to preface our examination of the more detailed narratives that we possess, by a brief statement of what we learn upon this subject from Paul.

It appears, then, that some years—probably not more than seven—from the death of Jesus,¹ God was pleased to reveal His

¹ Professor Jowett has shown, in his “Essay on the Chronology of Paul’s Writings,” the impossibility of determining the absolute date of the various incidents in his life. Taking the Epistle to the Galatians to have been written about A.D. 58, and allowing three years to have then elapsed since the second visit to Jerusa-

Son in him that he should preach Him to the Gentiles, and that within little more than three years afterwards he began to preach the faith he had once persecuted. We have in Paul, then, a witness whose truthfulness none can impeach, and who, though not a spectator of the incidents he describes, became a member of the brotherhood within a few years after their occurrence. His statements, consequently, may be accepted, not, indeed, as evidence of the facts themselves, but of their being believed at the time, and thus becoming the basis of a religious brotherhood; and his own belief in their reality is evinced by his having made them the foundation of a system of doctrine in support of which he encountered a life-long persecution.

The materials for a life of Jesus, derived from this source are very scanty. They may be summed up in a few words. Jesus was born of the seed of David after the flesh;¹ born of a woman;—under the law;²—became poor for the sake of the saints;³—was betrayed, and on the night of his betrayal broke bread and took the cup, and after giving thanks, said “Do this in remembrance of me;”⁴—was crucified dead and buried, and was raised again on the third day,⁵ and was afterwards seen by various disciples, and, finally, by Paul himself.⁶ Of his precepts only two are preserved, and they are quoted as authoritative—“Let not the wife depart from her husband”⁷ and “Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.”⁸ To complete the sum-

lem, this would make the date of his conversion about twenty years before;—three years from the conversion to the first visit to Jerusalem (Gal. i., 18), then fourteen years between the first and second visits (Gal. ii., 1), and then three years to the time of writing the epistle. These dates are, no doubt, in part, conjectural, but the difference of two or three years, either way, would not affect the argument. The conversion may be assumed to have occurred between five and ten years after the death of Jesus.

¹ Rom. i., 3. ² Gal. iv., 4. ³ 2 Cor. viii., 9. ⁴ 1 Cor. xi., 23–25.

⁵ Passim. The references to the crucifixion and resurrection are too numerous to particularize.

⁶ 1 Cor. xv., 6 *et seq.*

⁷ 1 Cor. vii., 10.

⁸ 1 Cor. ix., 14. This latter may, however, be merely a deduction of Paul himself.

mary we may add from later writings, the genuineness of which is not universally admitted, that Jesus took upon himself the form of a slave;¹—witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate,²—and ascended into heaven.³

The meagreness of the information thus supplied, may be ascribed to the circumstance that Paul, in his writings, never dwells upon the human aspect of the life of Jesus, excepting in reference to the crucifixion. In his view Jesus seems to have been a being who had appeared on earth among men—who, on earth, was a man; but who, in himself, had no necessary relation to humanity. He was the medium through which man might draw near to God, and God dispense spiritual blessings to man; and he was enabled to fill this position, because, while in his own proper nature he was the Wisdom, and Love, and Son of God; he had become as a man, poor for the sake of the faithful; had taken upon himself the form of a slave, and had even submitted to a shameful death. His object in this voluntary humiliation was that he might reconcile the world to God, and open for the Gentiles also an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Such a view of the nature and work of Jesus rendered superfluous, if it did not even exclude, all reference to his human life.⁴ It was not the doctrines taught by Jesus that Paul preached; probably he had never enquired what they were. It was Jesus himself that he set forth to his converts; Jesus crucified for their sake. The miracles which Jesus had performed were not the evidence to Paul of the true nature of his Lord. Had such been the case it would have been impossible, in the frank outpouring of his feelings, that all reference to these miracles should have been omitted; and there is not, in the whole of his writings, even a trace that he had

¹ Philip. ii., 7.

² 1 Tim. vi., 13.

³ Eph. i., 20; ii., 6; iv., 8. 1 Tim. iii., 16.

⁴ The view taken by Paul almost corresponds with the modern formula—"Christ came not to preach, but to be the Gospel."

heard of them. The chief proof to himself was, no doubt, the revelation that God had made of His Son in him; and the external evidence in support of that revelation—the only external evidence to which he ever refers, was, that God had raised Jesus from the dead; even this, however, is nowhere exhibited formally. The nearest approach to such an exhibition is, perhaps, in the expression that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead.¹ Not what Jesus had done, therefore, but what God had done for him accredited his mission. It may even be said that from Paul's point of view there would have been an inconsistency in dwelling upon miracles wrought by Jesus as evidence of his true character. In proportion as Jesus had, by their performance, exhibited his essential nature, would the contrast that Paul draws between what of right belonged to him—the form of God, and what he had assumed—the form of a slave, have lost its force.² But, however this may be, it is quite certain that Paul never refers, in any manner whatever, to any miracle in connection with the life of Jesus, excepting that wrought by God for him—his resurrection.³

In these writings, then, presumably the earliest in the New Testament, whose author is known, and whose date can be determined within a few years, and was, probably, within, at the utmost, thirty years of the death of Jesus, we find no other

¹ Rom. i., 4. The literal translation would, no doubt, be “appointed,” not “declared.” But the authorized version appears to express Paul's meaning. It was the being raised from the dead that manifested, or declared, the appointment of Jesus to be the Son of God.

² Even if the authenticity of the Epistle to the Philippians is doubted, there are similar contrasts in the unquestioned epistles—*e.g.* 2 Cor. viii., 9, though none so striking.

³ The author of “Ecce Homo” appears—for his language is somewhat ambiguous—to represent the faith of Paul as resting upon a belief in miracles, wrought by Jesus, which, by shewing his inherent greatness and power, shewed also the voluntary nature of his sacrifice. That this, at least, is not warranted by anything that Paul has written, or is reported to have said, is evident on a mere inspection. It must be remembered, also, that upon the ordinary view Paul himself had performed analogous miracles to those ascribed to Jesus, even to raising the dead. It was impossible, consequently, that he could regard such gifts as proofs of divinity.

information as to his life excepting that of his natural human birth;¹ his poverty—the meanness of his station in life;² his having disciples; his institution of a memorial feast; his betrayal, trial, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and, (possibly), ascension. We learn further, that these facts were the basis of a society that existed a few years after the death of Jesus, the members of which were admitted by being baptized into his name, believed in him as the Messiah, or Christ, and were waiting for his coming.

Towards the close of the second century, from one hundred and forty to one hundred and sixty years after the death of Jesus, there is abundant evidence that the four Gospels we now possess, and none other, were received as inspired by the majority of Christian churches; we might, perhaps, say by all, if we exclude from the title of Christian those sects, such as the Ebionites on the one side and the Gnostics on the other, who were regarded as heretical by the orthodox majority; and at that time they bore the same names as at present. It is true that they were not the only writings professing to record the life of Jesus, and known by the name of Gospels. At this time, from the authority of their assumed authors, and from the fact that they satisfied the general feeling of the church, they were regarded as alone authoritative. The others might be, and, in fact, were, read and quoted for purposes of edification. Only these, however, are from that time cited by the orthodox fathers in support of doctrine; and, ever since, they have been almost exclusively the source from which successive generations of Christians have drawn their conception of the life, teaching, nature, and character of Jesus.

¹ This is distinctly implied by the phrases “coming of the seed of David, after the flesh;” “coming of a woman;” “coming under the law;” especially the last.

² Took upon him the form of a slave. This expression, however, which is antithetical, must not be pressed. Paul might regard any human form as that of a slave in comparison with the glory that of right belonged to Jesus.

A cursory examination shews that these four Gospels divide themselves into two classes, differing in the picture they present of the teaching of Jesus; differing also in the events they relate—in the places in which they describe Jesus as habitually teaching, and in the length of time occupied by his ministry. The first three Gospels form the one class and the fourth Gospel the other. And this first impression is confirmed upon further examination. The more carefully the Gospels are compared, the more clearly does this distinction emerge. It would be premature to affirm that the two aspects of the life and teaching of Jesus are contradictory; but certainly they do not naturally correspond. They can, in fact, only be made to do so by processes of reconciliation, which imply defect or redundancy, omission or exaggeration, on one side or the other.

Confining our attention, in the first place, to the first three Gospels—the Synoptical Gospels as they have been termed—a careful comparison discloses the existence of very peculiar relations between them. It is not merely that they agree in the general description of the life of Jesus,—in their account of the miracles he performed, and of the character and method of his teaching,—while differing in many particular incidents. The agreement is often so complete as to lead, almost necessarily, to the inference that two of the authors copied from the third, or that all copied from some common source. It is not that of three independent witnesses who, in describing the same events, agree in substance, while differing in colour and detail, but that of persons who, when they do concur, repeat the same statement almost in the same words. And, at the same time, the differences, for the most part, are characteristic of each Gospel, and do not appear to be the result of an independent tradition, but rather of the views of the writer. The portions peculiar to the second Gospel, consist almost entirely of matters of detail; generally in the introduction of particulars that give, so to speak, a more realistic character to the story;—supplying the name, elsewhere omitted, as in the

case of the ruler of the synagogue, whose daughter is healed; or introducing the very words used by Jesus, as "Talitha Cumi;" or giving the stages through which a cure passes, as in the case of the blind man whose sight is restored. In the first and third Gospels, indeed, the parts that belong to each exclusively are often of considerable importance, and present the character and teaching of Jesus under very varied aspects. The general impression may be similar, but many important details are different.

If, then, we enquire by whom and at what time these narratives were written; the only testimony on the subject prior to Irenæus (A.D. 170) is that of Papias, preserved to us by Eusebius, and which recent discussions have made familiar. He is reported in one of his lost writings to have said that Matthew made a collection of the sayings ("Logia") of Jesus in Hebrew, which anyone interpreted (or translated) as he pleased; and that Mark wrote *memorabilia* of the life (words and deeds) of Jesus, derived from the teaching of Peter, but not in order. In this, however, there is nothing to shew that the Gospel according to Matthew, as we now possess it, is translated from the Hebrew original spoken of by Papias, or that our Gospel according to Mark is the same as that to which he refers. On the contrary, the former does not at all correspond to the description of a collection of the sayings of Jesus; and the close agreement between the two, in the order of the events, as well as in the events themselves, is a proof that one of them, at least, cannot be that which he describes. They are not two independent narratives. Either the first Gospel is founded upon the second, adding the discourses which are wanting in the latter, and retrenching some minuteness of detail; or the second is derived from the first by the reverse process of omitting or abridging the discourses and amplifying the details. The internal evidence, consequently, contradicts the external, or, at least, shews that it has been wrongly applied to one or the other.

Of the authorship of the third Gospel we have no information whatever, excepting that contained in the introduction to the work itself, and what may be deduced from the language of the last portion of the Acts of the Apostles. In the introduction the writer speaks of the many who had taken upon themselves to write accounts of what was believed among the brethren, according to the tradition of those who had been from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word; and states that having carefully investigated the subject from the very beginning, he thought it well to write a methodical history for the use of his friend. From the language of the last chapters of the "Acts" it has been inferred that the writer was a companion of Paul, and if so, it has been conjectured, with much plausibility, to have been Luke. A careful comparison of the latter work, however, renders it probable that it was composed at a date when no companion of Paul could have been alive, and almost certain that no friend of Paul could have been its author; and though it apparently contains fragments of a real diary, kept by a fellow traveller of the Apostle, yet that appears to have been freely dealt with, to make it harmonize with the residue of the work.¹ In any case, the third Gospel is the work of a compiler,—not of an eye-witness,—and its claims to our confidence must rest solely upon the opinion we form of his impartiality and judgment in the selection and use of his materials.

The uncertainty which exists as to the authorship of these Gospels, exists also with regard to the date at which they

¹ One single point may be referred to here in illustration of this. Let anyone read the Epistle to the Galatians, and Paul's emphatic protest there against circumcision, and the Epistle to the Romans—one main object of which is to shew that the Jews, as a people, would be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, only a remnant being admitted, and consider that Paul's central position was the abrogation of the law in Christ, and then ask himself if any truthful man could have asserted to the Jews in Rome that he had committed nothing against the customs of their fathers, and that for the hope of Israel he was bound with that chain, or whether any trusted follower of Paul could have represented him as making such an assertion.

were written. This can only be determined, so far as it is capable of determination, from an examination of the writings themselves; and it appears that they do furnish the means of fixing approximately, at least, the period of their composition, in the different forms they give to the recorded description by Jesus of the signs that should precede his second coming; and this conclusion is altogether independent of the opinions that may be formed as to the reality of a power of prophecy in its modern sense,—*i.e.* an accurate prediction of future events founded upon supernatural knowledge. If all the Gospels reported the words of Jesus alike, or, if differing in phraseology, they agreed in substance, the latter question might be raised; and it would be as allowable on the one side to contend that the precision and accuracy of the prophecy shewed supernatural knowledge in Jesus, as on the other to argue that the very accordance of the reputed prophecy with subsequent events shewed that it had, at least, been recorded after their occurrence. In the present case there is precisely such a variation between the versions of the prophecy of Jesus contained in the first two Gospels and that contained in the third, as to suggest a difference of date for their composition, and to furnish reasons for inferring what that date is. In the first two Gospels the abomination of desolation, which is by the most orthodox commentators referred to the encompassing of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, is the near precursor of the coming of the kingdom. It is true that this is accompanied, or rather preceded, by a statement that first the Gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world. But we see, from the Epistle to the Romans (x. 18), and from Eusebius (H. E., Book III., c. 1), that this was regarded as having taken place, at any rate, before the siege of Jerusalem.

In the third Gospel, the form of the prediction is different. The encompassing of Jerusalem by the Roman armies is distinctly foretold, instead of being shadowed forth

under a figure. That event is not, however, to be the precursor of the coming of the Son of Man, but of the desolation of Jerusalem itself; and then the Jews are to fall by the edge of the sword, and to be led away captive of all nations, and Jerusalem is to be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is accomplished; and then shall they see the Son of Man coming with power and great glory.

Without attempting now to enquire into the actual form of the prediction of Jesus, it is scarcely possible to resist the conclusion that the form it receives in the third Gospel, as compared with that which it bears in the first two, is attributable to the circumstance that such an interval had occurred after the first were written, as to shew the seeming inaccuracy of the older version. And, if this were the case,—if the later version received its form and colour from contemporaneous history,—there is equal reason to suppose that this was also the case with the earlier, and that the particular incidents selected as heralding the coming of the Son of Man were such as to receive their application from the events of the day. In that case the first Gospels would be presumably contemporary, or nearly so, with the rising that preceded the expedition of Vespasian, probably about A.D. 65 to 68, and the third of such a later date as to have shewn that there was no such immediate connexion between the troubles of those days, or the destruction of Jerusalem, and the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, as had been originally anticipated, but that another series of events required to be intercalated. At the same time, it must have been written before the revolt of Barchocheba, and while the Jews were waiting, down-trodden, but hopeful, for the manifestation of the Messiah.¹

¹ Dean Alford (N. T. for English readers, Int., c. iii., s. 4) argues that none of the Synoptical Gospels could have been originally written after the destruction of Jerusalem, otherwise the omission of all allusion to so signal a fulfilment of prophecy would be inexplicable. Even if we were to assume that the first two Gospels were written after that date, it would have been inconsistent with their impersonal character to contain any reference to a fulfilment of prophecies they recorded; and they were,

The question of the relative priority of the first two Gospels is one of much difficulty. In an enquiry of this nature, where so much depends upon the impression produced by slight circumstances, there will always be room for much diversity of opinion, and it is scarcely to be expected that all should arrive at the same conclusion. The universal tradition of the Church, which is in such a matter entitled to some weight, assigns priority to the Gospel according to Matthew; and it appears more probable that a work like the first Gospel should be abridged, with a view of adapting it to Gentile converts, than that so colourless a production as the second Gospel should have been the first record of an individuality so marked as that of Jesus. And as all our information suggests that the first preachers of the kingdom after the death of Jesus understood his Gospel to be primarily addressed to the Jews, it is a probable inference that the Gospel which gives greatest prominence to this aspect of his teaching was first written. And this, subject to qualifications that will be subsequently referred to, is the conclusion at which we have arrived.¹

In that case the first Gospel may be assumed to represent the traditions as to the ministry and death of Jesus, current in the Church at Jerusalem within about thirty years after his death. The second would be founded almost exclusively upon the first; and the third would be derived partly from the first two Gospels, and partly from other sources of information,

probably, composed, at any rate, at such a time as to allow believers to connect the predicted coming of the Son of Man with the calamities foretold. If not, so far from there being any "signal fulfilment" for the writers to record, the prophecy would have failed in its essential feature. And with regard to the third Gospel, which was, no doubt, composed after that event, does Dean Alford really suppose the writer to have been so little of an artist, as that when recording so precise a prediction he could have thought it needful to remind his readers of its fulfilment in an event of such world-wide notoriety as the fall of Jerusalem? If so, he has studied his writings, it would seem, to very little purpose.

¹ The entire question as to the comparative originality of these two Gospels is worked out in great detail, and with much critical acumen, by D'Eichthal, "Les Evangiles, Vol. I., Introduction." There is also an ingenious article on the Gospel of Mark in the "Revue des deux Mondes," by M. Albert Réville, in which the contrary conclusion is sustained with much ability.

oral or written, moulded into a form that embodied the author's own views, and, in many respects, profoundly modified in the process. That the picture they present coincided with the tradition generally received in the Church is shewn by the various notices of the life and sayings of Jesus in the surviving works of the orthodox fathers, previous to the middle of the second century. It is true that there are no citations that can be absolutely identified with anything they contain. Those that are made, however, exhibit a general agreement in substance, and in many cases a very close verbal resemblance to these three Gospels, chiefly with the first. Taken together, therefore, subject to a separate investigation for deciding their relative authority, as compared with each other, they furnish materials, from a careful examination of which we might hope to form a tolerably reliable, though, no doubt, imperfect conception of what Jesus was, what he taught, and what he suffered.

If we attempt to take in the fourth Gospel this is no longer practicable. The aspect under which the author represents the nature, life, teaching, and miracles of Jesus, is altogether different. We have been accustomed from childhood to read the four Gospels together, and to form a composite idea of Jesus from the combined influence of all, without stopping to consider whether the various aspects of this idea really harmonize. It is, therefore, difficult for us to realize the depth and sharpness of the actual contrast between the picture presented in the first three and that drawn in the fourth Gospel. In the former Jesus is the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy—the restorer of the kingdom to Israel; his apostles in that kingdom are to sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes; he comes not to destroy, but to fulfil the law; he is a Jew among Jews, recognizing his and their common nationality; he addresses himself exclusively to Jews, though indicating, with more or less of clearness, that their rejection of his claims would involve exclusion from his king-

dom; he weeps over Jerusalem, and longs to gather its children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. In the fourth Gospel there is not a trace of all this. In no respect does Jesus recognize the Jews as brethren; nowhere does he speak of the law as binding; nowhere does he claim the character of the Jewish Messiah, or preach the good news of the coming kingdom. All the human aspects of his character, as depicted in the Synoptical Gospels, are lost. He performs works of mercy, but not for the sake of doing good, so much as to shew forth his own glory and his relationship to God. He weeps at the tomb of Lazarus, but scarcely from human sympathy, for he had deliberately permitted him to die to the intent that the disciples might believe; and he knows that he is about to change the mourning of the bereaved sisters into joy, by raising him from the dead. He seeks John the Baptist, but not in order to submit to the rite of baptism, for the history implies that he was not baptized; but in order that John might bear explicit testimony to his heavenly character and divine mission. In fact, excepting in the names of Jesus and his disciples, and in the relation of one or two miracles, there is scarcely a point in which the two stories touch until the night of the betrayal.¹

In any attempt, consequently, to depict the human life of Jesus, it is first of all necessary to determine the respective claims of the Synoptical Gospels, and of the fourth. It may suffice for purposes of edification or of doctrine to blend the various pictures into one artificial whole, without troubling ourselves to enquire whether they really harmonize; or we may exercise a kind of electicism, selecting patterns from one description or the other, and tacitly ignoring or keeping out of sight whatever is inharmonious or inconsistent; or we may dwell alternately upon one picture or the other, more fairly bringing the two into juxtaposition. Any such course,

¹ This is very instructively, but unconsciously, shewn by a "Harmony of the Gospels," published by the Tract Society.

however, is impossible here. At the very outset of our enquiry we have to decide which authority we are to follow, as to the time and place of the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus;—did it begin in Galilee after the imprisonment of John the Baptist, as a call to repentance because the kingdom of heaven was at hand; or in Jerusalem, by cleansing the Temple and thrusting out the dealers and money-changers, long before John was cast into prison? And this is only a sample of the discrepancies that pervade the two accounts, so far as the incidents of the life are concerned; while the differences between the teaching and character of Jesus, according as we follow one account or the other, is even more marked and profound.

It has been suggested that this latter difference is due to the circumstance that the author of the fourth Gospel was one of a narrower circle of disciples, brought into more intimate relationship with their Master, and therefore able to understand the deeper and more spiritual aspects of his doctrine; while the other Gospels exhibit only its simpler aspect as it appeared to ordinary disciples or to the multitude. But this is contradicted by the Gospel itself. It contains no hint of any special communication to John apart from the other apostles. Instead of this, we find him upon every occasion, up to the evening of the betrayal, upon the same level with the rest; and on that evening, though he is represented as being distinguished by leaning upon the bosom of Jesus, there is no separate communication of doctrine made to him. The discourse then delivered is described as being addressed to all the apostles (excepting Judas), and would have been heard by Matthew and Peter as well as by John. And, beside this, the themes upon which Jesus is represented in this pneumatic Gospel as dwelling are addressed to the multitude rather than to his disciples. The dignity of his own nature—his oneness with God—his pre-existence—the mystical relation in which he stands to the faithful, as the bread they must eat and the water they must drink,—all these, and many more similar mysteries, are pro-

claimed in their crudest form to the Jewish multitude. Whatever there is of simplicity, tenderness, or encouragement in his discourses is reserved for his disciples, and spoken to all alike. The hard sayings are uttered in the presence of the public, almost, as it would seem, to destroy the impression that his miracles are reported to have produced. It is, in fact, difficult to form any other conclusion from the fourth Gospel than that Jesus, of set purpose, repelled the Jews lest they should believe in him.¹

How marked, too, is the contrast between the character of his teaching in the two accounts. Instead of the universal invitation implied in the words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart," etc.; there is the distinct limitation implied in the words, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me," and in the prayer, "not for the world, but for those given me out of the world." Instead of the plain precepts of love to God and love to man being the fulfilment of the law, there is a series of enigmatical discourses, which we, by help of the Christian tradition, and in view of the nature ultimately assigned to Jesus in the Christian dogma, are able to understand, but which must have appeared at once unintelligible and blasphemous if they had been uttered by Jesus before the Jews among whom he lived as a man. And it is difficult to associate the ideas of meekness and lowliness of heart with the reiterated claims to oneness with God—to pre-existence—to individual superiority. In the Synoptics it is to those who listen to his instruction that Jesus addresses the words: "Ye are the light of the world." In the fourth Gospel he claims this character for himself—"I am the light of the

¹ It may be said that a similar conclusion might be drawn from his teaching in parables, as represented in the Synoptical Gospels, and from the reason there assigned—"that seeing they should see and should not perceive," etc. It may be said, however, that there is an historical propriety in this latter proceeding that is wanting in the other.

world." In the one it is those who love their enemies that are proved, by this alone, to be the children of the Father, and therefore brothers. In the other, the test of brotherhood is love of the brethren.

It is not necessary to pursue these contrasts further. Enough has been done to shew the different conceptions of the character and life of Jesus that must be formed according as we receive or reject the fourth Gospel. If we receive it we have no right to place any reliance upon the acts or speeches of Jesus as related in the Synoptics. If we reject it there is nothing to modify the picture they present, since it is in harmony with all early Christian tradition, so far as relates to the public life of Jesus. We proceed, therefore, to examine the claims of the fourth Gospel to be received as authentic and authoritative.

The only external testimony to its authorship is, that towards the close of the second century, it was received as one of the four Gospels, and as the work of the apostle John; and that we are told by Irenaeus that it was written by him at Ephesus, near the close of his life.¹ The first formal quotation from it is by Theophilus of Antioch, writing about the year 180.² And though there are previous references that may be plausibly supposed to relate to it—the earliest of these is about the year 150, or nearly half a century after its supposed date. It is true that recently an argument in favour of the previous existence of the work has been drawn from its supposed use by Basilides (A.D. 125), founded upon a passage in the *Philosophoumena*, and by Valentinus (A.D. 150), founded upon a statement by Tertullian, but, apparently, with no sufficient reason in either case. And even if the inference drawn as to its use by these two writers was well founded, this would shew that the work, indeed, was in existence at the time, but also that it was received, not by the Church, but by Gnostics.

¹ Eusebius II. E., B. V., c. 7.

² Reuss, Hist. du Canon.

It would therefore furnish a strong argument against its supposed authorship. For if it had been written by John at the close of a long apostolical career, during the last years of which, at least, we must suppose him to have been teaching the same doctrines and exhibiting the same aspect of the life of Jesus, it can scarcely be supposed that a heretic would have been the first to use the work, or that it would have to wait for another quarter of a century before it received any recognition by the orthodox fathers.

This entire absence of external testimony is not, and, in fact, cannot be denied. It has been, however, suggested that many testimonies might have existed that are now lost. Papias, for instance, might have referred to it as well as to those by Matthew and Mark, though his words have not been preserved. Irenæus, also, who had lived in Asia in his youth, and had thus known, or, at least, had listened to Polycarp, a disciple of John, would not, it is surmised, have received it as the work of that apostle, unless it had been certified to him by Polycarp. And this is, no doubt, possible. But it is not supported by any proof, and it conflicts with probability. If the works of Papias had contained any statement upon the subject that confirmed the orthodox view, Eusebius would certainly have quoted him. And Irenæus, who gives us the statement as to the time and place of the composition of this Gospel, and who repeatedly refers to Polycarp as his authority, would have also referred to him for this if he had heard anything of the sort from him. And though we may question the critical judgment of these Fathers, no one can doubt their readiness to cite every available authority in support of their views. Their silence, consequently, is a proof that they knew of no such statements as have been suggested.

Still it may be made a question whether the materials at the disposal of the author were not such as to entitle his work to credit. He might, for instance, have been able to avail himself of his personal recollections of the teach-

ing of the apostle, or he might have had at his disposal written memorials of that teaching, preserved by the zeal or the affection of some of his disciples. And these, it may be urged, might, probably, from the intimacy that had subsisted between John and our Lord, be more accurate and reliable than the traditions collected by the authors or compilers of the first three Gospels. The latter part of this suggestion may, however, be answered at once. It is contrary to all experience and all analogy that a late tradition, springing up in a distant place among utter strangers, should be more trustworthy than one earlier in time, nearer in place, and arising among persons, many of whom had been sharers in the events to which it related.

There are, no doubt, reasons for surmising that the work did, in fact, originate in a place where the memory of the apostle John was cherished, and where the followers of John the Baptist were, or had been, numerous. And Ephesus appears to fulfil both of these conditions. We may infer from the Acts (xix. 1-7) that there was a body of John's followers residing there, some of whom had joined the disciples—for there is nothing to suggest that all had done this. And the uniform tradition of the Church represents John as residing at Ephesus during his later years. The prominence given in the fourth Gospel to the testimony of the Baptist appears to imply that some of the immediate circle to which the book was addressed would be influenced by his opinion. And the words "this is he of whom I said, after me cometh one that is preferred before me, for he was before me" (John i. 30), and "he must increase, but I must decrease" (iii. 30), not merely give a precise application to a speech whose meaning was left indeterminate in the Synoptics, but even seem intended to deprecate a jealousy engendered by the success of the new society, as compared with that of which the Baptist was the founder. And, at the same time, the precedence given to the apostle John in some of the most eventful incidents of

the history—the importance attached to love of the brethren, agreeing with the few words traditionally attributed to John when he had no longer strength for a formal discourse;¹ and the implied statement that he was originally a disciple of the Baptist, whom he had left only because Jesus was pointed out to him as the Lamb of God, equally serve to indicate that the circle of believers whose traditions had been collected, or for whom the work was designed, was one in which the authority of that apostle was respected.

And, possibly, we may even go further than this. As, has been pointed out,² the fourth Gospel divides itself into two parts. The former, containing the history of the teaching and of the miracles of Jesus, differs materially from that of the Synoptics; the latter, relating to the passion, is very similar in its incidents, and in some particulars (from the Christian standpoint) is even more consistent and probable. And it is chiefly in this latter portion that the precedence of which we have spoken is attributed to John. It is quite possible, therefore, that this may have been founded upon a tradition that grew up under the sanction, and was even founded upon the teaching, of the apostle.

We are compelled to acknowledge that the story would not be necessarily any more trustworthy upon that account. There is, perhaps, nothing in which the memory of persons who are passing into extreme old age is more likely to be deceptive than in the part they have themselves taken in any great event with which they have been connected.³ And if the earlier Gospels really represent the tradition that grew up in Jerusalem, or the earliest teaching of the apostles, that tradition or teaching must have been in process of forma-

¹ Or was this tradition the reflex result of the Gospel and the Epistles?

² *Mélanges d'histoire religieuse*, par Edmond Scherer, p. 82.

³ The recent publication of the Correspondence of Earl Grey on the subject of the Reform Bill, by shewing how unfounded were the claims many years since made by Lord Brougham to have influenced the mind of the King upon a decisive occasion, shews also how eminently truthful men, even in the full possession of their faculties, may be subject to hallucinations in matters affecting their personal importance.

tion under the eye of John himself; for we learn from the Epistle to the Galatians that he was at Jerusalem about a quarter of century after the death of Jesus; and it must, in that case, have received his approval, as well as that of Peter, and of the rest of the Church.

The portion that may thus be plausibly connected with the teaching of the apostle John, has little bearing upon the history. And in so far as it has, we should still be unable to say to what extent it might have been modified by the author. Whether, therefore, the fourth Gospel really represents the views of John, can only be decided, if at all, by comparing it with what we are able to gather of his opinions from other sources.

The latest reference to John in the New Testament, unless we suppose him to have been the author of the Apocalypse, is in the Epistle to the Galatians. Long before this he has dropped altogether out of the narrative of the "Acts;" and no one, from the account there given, would ever suspect his presence in Jerusalem at the period of Paul's visit. From the Epistle we learn, however, that he was there, one of the three leaders of the Church; one, in fact, of those who, though seeming to be pillars, added nothing to Paul in conference; but who ultimately recognized that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, and gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that they should go to the Gentiles, reserving to themselves the mission to the circumcision. We have no right, perhaps, to draw remoter inferences from this statement. Unless we refuse all credit to Paul, we must conclude that John did not then consider that preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles formed any part of the duty of the apostles, but that their mission was confined to the Jews.¹

¹ Gal. ii., 9. "We unto the uncircumcision, they (Peter, James, and John) unto the circumcision." This is one of the instances in which it is difficult to acquit the author of the Acts of wilful suppression.

Subsequently to this period, but how soon after we know not, all notices concur in representing him as established at Ephesus, and suggest, at least, that he continued to preserve the judaical tendencies that from Paul's statement we should be disposed to attribute to him. Thus Irenæus ascribes to him the preservation of a saying of Jesus, illustrating the abundance that should prevail on earth during the reign of the Messiah, as extravagant as any of the rabbinical fables on the same subject.¹ Polycrates, cited by Eusebius (H. E., B. III., c. 31), says that he was accustomed to wear the head-dress of a Jewish priest; and Polycarp, cited by Irenæus, and Polycrates refer to him as having been accustomed to observe the anniversary of the crucifixion on the day following the evening of the Paschal Supper, in opposition to the usage that finally prevailed. It is true that these merely traditional accounts must be received with great caution. The concurrence of several independent authorities is not, however, without weight, and we can scarcely imagine that the notices thus preserved should uniformly suggest tendencies on the part of the Apostle opposed to those displayed by the author of the fourth Gospel, if, in fact, that Gospel had been founded upon his teaching. And although there is too much uncertainty with regard to the authorship of the Epistles to Timothy to allow of their being cited as an authority upon this subject, yet it is not probable that the mournful phrase, "thou knowest that all they which be in Asia are turned away from me,"² would have been attributed to Paul, unless there had been some

¹ "The men of old, who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, remember to have heard from him how, in those days, the Lord taught and said: 'Days shall come when vines shall grow each with 10,000 shoots, and to every shoot 10,000 branches, and to every branch 10,000 tendrils, and to every tendril 10,000 bunches, and to every bunch 10,000 berries, and every berry when pressed shall yield twenty-five measures of wine,' etc., etc. To this Papias also, who heard John, and had intercourse with Polycarp—Papias, an ancient teacher of the Church—bears written testimony in the fourth of his five books." Adv. Hær., cited in Strauss' new Life of Jesus, Vol. I., p. 89.

² 2 Tim. i. 15.

wide-spread defection from his principles in this the chief scene of his labours ; and if so, it is difficult to avoid connecting this with the establishment of John at Ephesus as the head of the Church in that district. We can, therefore, it would seem, only attribute the doctrines taught in the fourth Gospel, and the view it presents of the relations of Jesus to the Jews, to the teaching of John, on the assumption that all the tradition relating to him is untrustworthy, and that the statements of Paul are exaggerated ; and it is difficult to say how far such assumptions might lead us.¹

There are few persons who would now argue that the same person could have written the Book of the Revelations and the fourth Gospel, excepting upon some such hypothesis as that recently suggested by Dr. Döllinger, that the author employed different persons as amanuenses, and that the variations in style, knowledge of Greek, and literary finish, perceptible in the two works, result from this. As, however, there is no sufficient external evidence of the authorship of the former work,² and there are strong probabilities against it, we do not dwell upon this point. It will be enough to call attention to the real nature of the question involved, which sometimes seems to have been misapprehended. This is not whether such a change of opinion might have been produced in John by time and reflection, as is perceptible in the writings in question.³ A change

¹ We have not referred to the incident of rushing out of the bath rather than meet Cerinthus ; for the mystical love inculcated in the fourth Gospel has been abundantly proved to be quite compatible with the utmost practical intolerance to all who are not recognized as brethren.

² The evidence on the subject is collected in Taylor's "Fourth Gospel." It is, no doubt, true, as he states, that it is stronger than that in favour of the reputed authorship of any of the New Testament writings ; but this only shews how slight all that evidence really is.

³ Such, for instance, as has taken place in the mind of Professor F. W. Newman, and in view of which (apparently) he admits it to be possible that the Revelations and the fourth Gospel might have been written by the same person, if a sufficient interval were allowed. He should rather ask himself whether any lapse of time and change of view could make him imagine that his Irish friend, during his visit to Oxford, preached extreme rationalism, and was forbidden to reside there in consequence.

like this may, under certain aspects, be regarded as possible. It is whether any one, who had been a companion of Jesus during the whole of his public life, and who, as a result of that companionship, had for thirty years after his death entertained such an idea of his preaching and of the nature and object of his mission as are exhibited in the Revelations, could have afterwards replaced those impressions by others, not merely different, but opposite, such as form the basis of the fourth Gospel;¹ or conversely, whether any one, while retaining in his memory such a recollection of the teaching of Jesus as is exhibited in the latter work, could have written the former? To say, with some orthodox commentators, that change of place and progress of time had altered the views of the apostle, and had made him see old truths in a new light; or, with others, that the promised Paraclete brought to his recollection incidents and discourses which had lain dormant there for half a century, is, no doubt, to furnish an answer, such as it is, to these questions, but one which deprives the work of all historical value. The difference in question is fundamental. The one is the stronghold of those who look for the future reign of Jesus upon earth as the anointed king (= Messiah = Christ) of Hebrew prophecy, and for the gathering of the Jews to his kingdom in Jerusalem; the other, of those who have discarded these material anticipations for the heavenly kingdom, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. So that while the former lost its authority in the Eastern Church, and was scarcely allowed a place in the Canon, the latter, which at first had only been used by heretics,² and

¹ e.g. "Those that say they are Jews and are not." Rev. Comp. "The Jews" throughout in the Gospel. "They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." Rev. Comp. "In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you" Gospel. "The wrath of the Lamb" (*αγνιον*). Rev. Comp. "Behold the Lamb (*αυνος*) of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," Gospel, etc.

² Philosophoumena referred to above. The reference proves that the Gospel was used by the school of Basilides, though not by Basilides himself; and Irenæus, cited in Taylor's Fourth Gospel. The reader who wishes to see the question as to the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel fully discussed, is referred to "An attempt to

was scarcely known to orthodox writers, has been ultimately accepted as the truest representation of the nature and person and doctrine of Jesus.

We need scarcely refer to the argument in support of its authenticity, founded upon the claim which the fourth Gospel apparently makes, by implication, at least, to be the work of "the disciple that Jesus loved." It may fairly be a question whether the passage relied upon¹ is the testimony that the writer bears to himself, or not rather the work of some reader, inserted in his copy of the Gospel for the purpose of supplying what he felt to be a want—the omission of all reference to the person of the writer. In whatever light it may be regarded, it will have no weight with anyone who remembers the number of pseudonymous writings current at the time, and the lax views that prevailed upon the subject. There is nothing in the entire Christian literature of the second and third centuries to suggest the opinion that a person composing any work in the name of an apostle or martyr, would have regarded himself, or have been regarded by those of his party, as doing what was wrong. On the contrary, pious frauds are explicitly sanctioned by almost every orthodox apologist, and, apparently, were practised by many. That a work, consequently, should have appeared during the course of the second century, bearing the name of any person, raises, at the utmost, only a faint presumption that he was the author; unless there are some corroborating circumstances, and especially unless there are independent grounds for supposing that it was known to his con-

ascertain the character of the fourth Gospel," etc., by John James Taylor, B.A., where the subject is treated with a fulness and impartiality that leave nothing to be desired. The present chapter was written long before the writer had seen that work, but its appearance has enabled him to correct his arguments in some respects, and to omit much that he had inserted.

¹ John xxi., 25. "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." It might, indeed, be sufficient to say that the chapter is obviously an addition by another writer, and at a much later date. It is quite certain that the original Gospel finished with the twentieth chapter.

temporaries. And, in the present instance, there is not a vestige of evidence that such was the case.

If, then, turning from the external evidence, we examine the contents of the Gospel itself, we shall discover abundant reasons for disputing its accuracy. Let us take the raising of Lazarus—the most striking incident in the work. Are we to suppose that this is the description of an actual occurrence, so that we have no alternative but that of miracle, according to the ordinary view, or that of fraud, according to the suggestion originally made by M. Renan?¹ This alternative can only exist on the supposition that the account is written by an eye-witness. A story like this, related at second hand, by an unknown author, at a distance from the scene of the alleged miracle, and at a time when all who might confirm or contradict the story had passed away, would of itself be entitled to no more credit than the relation of similar or even more astounding miracles performed by mediæval saints. Is, then, the account such as to suggest the report of a spectator, or the invention of a later writer, anxious to exalt the subject of his biography? Surely the latter. In fact, the whole description is little more than putting into a dramatic form the answer of Abraham in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in the third Gospel;—“neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” Lazarus, whom the rich man in the parable desired to be raised in order to warn his brethren, is, in fact, raised here; but the Chief Priests and Pharisees, when they hear of the miracle, so far from believing, are only stimulated to adopt more immediate measures to remove Jesus out of their way. One does rise from the dead, but only to heighten their incredulity. These coincidences between the name, the miracle suggested in the one case and accomplished

¹ In the 13th edition of the “Vie de Jesus,” M. Renan gives up the hypothesis of fraud, at any rate as regards the conduct of Jesus himself.

in the other, and the actual as compared with the predicted result, can scarcely be regarded as accidental. And it is easy to understand how the idea of the parable should be represented as realized in action in the history; while it is impossible to conceive how the fact of the actual resurrection of Lazarus should only have suggested the moral of a parable.

The manner, too, in which the incidents are marshalled; the needless delay of Jesus, intended to allow of the death of Lazarus, and thus to occasion the deep grief of his sisters—the enigmatical utterances to the disciples; the dialogue with Martha; the weeping at the tomb; the unmeaning prayer; the command to Lazarus—all give an artificial and, so to speak, a theatrical character to the scene, at variance with the idea we are accustomed to form of Jesus, but which, it must be confessed, lend some colour to the original hypothesis of M. Renan. That such an inference should be capable of being drawn, furnishes a strong reason for distrusting the truth of the story. For whatever doubts may be suggested as to other aspects of the character of Jesus, it appears impossible to question his entire sincerity and truthfulness.

Apart, however, from objections arising out of the form of the narrative, it seems impossible that such an occurrence—the last miracle wrought by Jesus, the only one wrought by him during his last visit to Jerusalem,—so notorious, and exercising so marked an influence upon his own fate,—should have never been referred to by any evangelist or apologist, excepting by the writer of the fourth Gospel, for more than a century after its occurrence. Surely Mark and Luke, who, according to the received hypothesis, wrote for Gentile churches—Rome, or Corinth, or Alexandria—could have been restrained by no fears for the safety of Lazarus; and they would, it might be supposed, have been glad to enrich their Gospels by so striking an addition.¹

¹ Dean Alford, N. T. for English Readers, Introduction, chap. i., sect. v., 1, contents himself with saying that the omission is inexplicable. Truly it is so upon the

And though, with regard to Paul, it may be said that he does not refer to any miracles wrought by Jesus, and therefore could not be expected to refer to this, it is scarcely possible but that such a miracle should have, in some degree, influenced his reasonings. How, in such a case, could he have spoken of Jesus as the first born of the dead,¹ or the first fruits of them that slept,² without some qualifying phrase? Or would he have appealed to the fact of his having been raised from the dead as the only proof that a resurrection was possible, if a more marvellous raising from the dead had taken place only a few days previously, witnessed not by friends and followers alone, but by the indifferent and the hostile? Or would he have been represented as arguing before the Athenians that the mere fact of God having raised Jesus from the dead, was an assurance that he would by him judge all the world in righteousness, if such a raising from the dead as that of Lazarus had been known to the author of the Acts? Obviously, the difficulty Paul was seeking to remove, in his argument to the Corinthians, was the utter incredibility, to their apprehension, that the dead body should be reanimated and again united to the living spirit, especially when once the process of corruption had commenced.³ In answer to such a difficulty, the example of Lazarus would have been far more pertinent than that of Jesus. Lazarus was a mere man like those he was addressing, and the process of corruption must have been presumed to have commenced in the four days since his death, while Jesus was, in a special sense, the Son of God, and his flesh had seen no corruption. If, of

assumption that these writers knew of the event, as they must have done if it occurred; but not upon the assumption that it never took place. And when a fact, as to which there is no doubt, is inexplicable upon one supposition, and perfectly intelligible and natural on another, reasoners, who have no bias, ordinarily adopt that supposition which enables them to explain and understand it.

¹ πρώτο τόκος—not first begotten, as in the Authorized Version.

² 1 Cor. xv., 20.

³ This also is represented as essentially the difficulty with the Athenians; “when they heard of raising (not of the resurrection of) the dead, some mocked,” etc.

the exceptional instance of Jesus, he could say, "whom God raised not from the dead, if the dead rise not," much more might he have said this in the case of Lazarus. The whole argument of Paul throughout this epistle, in reference to the resurrection of Jesus, proceeds upon the assumption that the raising of one from the dead was the work of God the Father alone, and gave a special and, as it were, a prerogative character to the individual thus raised. It is, therefore, completely inconsistent with his knowledge of such an incident as the raising of Lazarus. And of that incident, if, in fact, it had occurred, he could not have been ignorant.

The interview with the woman of Samaria, the three days residence in a Samaritan city, and the recognition by the inhabitants are so improbable, as to be, in fact, barely credible. It is true that we are not at present entitled to argue from the improbability that Jesus, when seeking to be received by the Jews as the Messiah, should have passed through Samaria and have taught in their cities; for in the fourth Gospel he does not assume the character of the Messiah; and friendship with the Samaritans would be the natural result of the hostility with which he regarded the Jews. Nor, perhaps, can we infer anything from the subsequent statements in the Acts of the Apostles as to the Gospel having been preached in Samaria, apparently for the first time by Philip, for, apart from the doubt that attaches to the earlier portions of the Acts, that work is written by one of the authors whose fidelity is involved in the result of our present enquiry. The improbability to which we refer arises out of the position and beliefs of the Samaritans themselves, and is altogether independent of any data furnished by the New Testament writers.

The Samaritans claimed to be the descendants, and they were the representatives of the ten tribes who, under Jeroboam, had renounced their allegiance to the dynasty of David. They occupied the land of Ephraim, and they inherited the traditions of that tribe, together with its territory. They possessed the

sites of many of the most memorable incidents commemorated in the early legends of Israel,—the mount upon which Abraham was traditionally reported to have taken Isaac for the purpose of offering him up a human sacrifice to the national God,—the well that Jacob had given to Joseph,—the twin mountains of blessing and cursing, Ebal and Gerizim,—and Shiloh, the earliest centre of Israelitish worship. When the Jews returned from captivity, they had been ready to welcome them as friends and kinsmen, and even to assist in the re-building of the Temple, and the restoration of the city. Their advances, however, had been repelled with contumely, and from that period there had been a ceaseless antagonism between them, embittered and deepened by centuries of mutual aversion and mutual wrong, and which would render them the last persons to recognize the claims of any one who was to restore the kingdom of David, and establish the supremacy of Judah.

And this was not all. The Samaritans rejected the very prophecies that announced the coming of the Messiah ; principally upon that very ground. The whole of the later literature of the kingdom of Judah was pervaded by the sentiment of its rightful supremacy over the whole land of Palestine, including Samaria, and the prophecies foretold its ultimate restoration to actual dominion over it in the Messianic era. And they assumed, throughout, the right of Jerusalem to be regarded as the sole place in which Jehovah could be worshipped. Against these two pretensions the separate existence of the Samaritans was a standing protest. They claimed, at least, equality and independence, and they asserted the superior sanctity of Mount Gerizim. While, therefore, they accepted the law as contained in the Pentateuch, they rejected the entire residue of the Jewish Scriptures ; and this rejection necessarily implied ignorance of their contents. They might, indeed, know that the Jews expected some leader, who, by help of Jehovah, was to free them from the Roman yoke, and establish their kingdom in all, or more than all, its original extent ; for this was the rallying

cry of every successive leader of an insurrection. But if they did know this, it is certain, that so far from sharing the hopes of the Jews, they must have dreaded their realization. However much they might regret their subjection to Rome, its equal, though stern administration must, in their view, have contrasted favourably with the treatment they were to expect under the dominion of their ancient foes. During the brief period of stormy freedom that followed the revolt of the Maccabees, the city of Samaria had been taken by the Jews, under Hyrcanus, and rased to the ground. And the Samaritans could expect nothing less than the proscription of their worship and the desecration of their holy places, if the Jews should at any time become independent and powerful. Of the more spiritual aspects of the expected kingdom they knew, and, in fact, could know, nothing. They believed in the divine character of the Mosaic law, as contained in their copy of the Pentateuch, and in the sacredness of their Temple on Mount Gerizim. And they do not seem to have looked beyond this. So long as they were permitted to worship Jehovah in peace and safety, according to their own ritual and in their own sanctuary, they asked and expected nothing further.¹

Notwithstanding all this, the writer of the fourth Gospel represents Messianic ideas to have so completely penetrated all ranks of society, as that a Samaritan woman of the lowest class, of immoral habits, living, apparently, in open concubinage, is able to speak of her knowledge that the Messiah should come, and that he should then reveal all things. She is even made

¹ It must be remembered that our only sources of information, with regard to the Samaritans, are the writings of their avowed enemies—the Jewish historians—from the author of “Kings” down to Josephus. It is quite possible that the blood of the Samaritans was as unmixed as that of the Jews, and that the real ground of hostility was their resistance to the claim of the returned Jews, that Jerusalem should alone possess a temple for the worship of Jehovah. We can scarcely be certain of anything beyond the facts that they claimed to be descendants of Joseph (through Ephraim), and that they accepted no portion of the Hebrew canon but the Pentateuch. Their copy, however, so far differed from that in use among the Jews as to allow them to regard Gerizim as the place in which Jehovah would record his name.

to recognize Jesus, though a Jew, in that character, because he displays unexpected and, seemingly inexplicable, acquaintance with a portion of her past history. And not only she, but the inhabitants of the city also believe in him as the Messiah of Jewish prophecy, merely upon her report, and invite him, on that account, to enter the city; an invitation he at once accepts. Such a display, shall we say of faith, or of credulity, is, in the highest degree, improbable anywhere, and impossible in Samaritans with regard to a Jew claiming to be the King of the Jews;—*i.e.* “the Messiah, which is called Christ.”

The narrative, however, does not stop here. Incredible as it must appear that persons ignorant of the existence even of those writings in which the Messiah was predicted, should, nevertheless, expect his coming;—that Samaritans, who both hated and feared the Jews, should at once accept as Messiah a Jew who proclaimed that his nation was in the right, and that the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what;¹ and that the inhabitants of a city should have believed in Jesus, and have invited him to reside with them, upon the report of a woman living with a man who was not her husband;—this incredibility is, if possible, heightened by the result attributed to his visit. The people of the city, we are told, hear him themselves, and “know that he is the Saviour of the world—the Christ.” For in this they not only attain an elevation which, so far as we know, none of the Apostles ever reached—but they anticipate the loftiest conception that the Church has ever formed of the mission of Jesus. And in doing this they pass completely beyond the ideas of their nation and age, and employ a phraseology that would have been unmeaning to themselves and their audience; that no one of that generation, in fact, could have understood, if simply employed, without further explanation.

¹ It is only just to the author to remark that this passage, which is opposed to the tenor of Jesus' discourses, and at variance with the purport of the whole Gospel, is, probably, an interpolation. This, however, scarcely affects the argument in the text.

And not only these Samaritans recognize Jesus as the Messiah upon merely hearing him. Many others are represented as exercising equal faith upon similar grounds. Thus Andrew spends a night with him, and the next morning announces him to his brother Simon as the Messiah. Then Philip, upon a mere invitation to follow Jesus, which he accepts, describes him to Nathanael as the prophet of whom Moses, in the Law and the Prophets, did write; and then Nathanael, because Jesus saw him (in spirit) under the fig tree, proclaims him as the Son of God and King of Israel, which, as well as those employed by Philip, are convertible terms with the Messiah. This is, indeed, consistent with the view taken by the author of the fourth Gospel, but it is inconsistent with the opinions as to the Messiah that then prevailed among the Jews. At this time Jesus had performed no miracle. He had assumed no public character. He was neither the preacher of the kingdom nor a teacher of the people. He possessed, therefore, none of the marks by which, according to the prevailing Jewish sentiment, the Messiah was to be distinguished. It is simply impossible, therefore, that any Jew should, at that time, have acknowledged him in that character.

It is difficult not to see in this an intentional, though tacit, contradiction to the account in the Synoptical Gospels, according to which it is to Peter that the first formal recognition of Jesus, as the Messiah, is due. From the prominence assigned to this incident, and the emphatic words attributed to Jesus on the occasion, it would appear that this speech by Peter was regarded as an important, perhaps a critical event; and it may be that the priority so generally conceded to him in the earlier Gospels is connected with this. If, however, we adopt the fourth Gospel, the language of Peter becomes a mere formal repetition of a profession often before made, and the words originally attributed to Jesus are rendered unmeaning. How could it be said that flesh and blood had not revealed this to Peter, when in truth his own brother Andrew

had first informed him of the fact—when Philip and Nathanael, in whose company he had been living for nearly two years, had, on their very first introduction to Jesus, made the same acknowledgment—nay, when even the schismatic Samaritans had preceded him on one occasion when he was presumably present? True, Peter is made, in the fourth Gospel also, the mouth-piece of the Apostles in making the acknowledgment; but how different are the circumstances, and how tame the whole character of the incident, as compared with the earlier narrative. Instead of the sudden outburst, giving expression to an idea, perhaps long vaguely entertained, but which had never previously assumed a definite form, and now flashed irresistibly upon his mind, and which is received by Jesus as the result of an immediate revelation from God;—the acknowledgment is assigned as a mere subsidiary reason for continuing to adhere to Jesus. And instead of calling forth praise or blessing, its only effect is to provoke a rebuke, which any one of the Apostles, including Peter, might apply to himself;¹—“have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”

Taken by itself, and apart from the circumstances of time and country, the account of the scene in question in the fourth Gospel may be equally credible with that in the first three. No particular importance could be attached to the declaration of Peter, regarded as a mere formal repetition of a profession of belief that so many had made before. But when we remember that every one of these various persons,—Samaritans as well as Galileans,—had a previous independent history and development of his own,—that they had grown up under the influence of ideas received, as beyond all question, by all whom they knew, and whose truth, therefore, it would never have occurred to them to doubt; it will be seen how improbable it is that they should suddenly, and without any previous pre-

¹ The tenor of the fourth Gospel distinctly implies that, up to the night of the betrayal, Judas was among the Apostles upon, ostensibly, as favoured and trusted a footing as any.

paration, have emancipated themselves from these ideas, so as to have enabled them, spontaneously, to have assigned to Jesus a character which he is not even represented as claiming. And then it will also appear impossible that the acknowledgment of Peter should have been made and received in the mere matter-of-course way in which it is represented in the fourth Gospel.

And this is only one, out of many instances, in which the position assigned to Peter, in the earlier Gospels, is ignored or lowered in the last. In the first two Gospels Jesus is represented as singling out, as the very first of his immediate followers, the two brothers, Simon and Andrew, who, at his call, leave everything to follow him. And throughout the Synoptical Gospels, Peter is almost invariably mentioned first among the Apostles; and he is represented as having been selected by Jesus, in some of the most striking incidents of his career, as one of the three chosen to accompany him. In the fourth Gospel there is nothing of this. Andrew introduces his brother to Jesus, and, excepting upon the single occasion in which he is made to answer, in the name of the twelve, to the enquiry of Jesus, whether they also will leave him, there is no mention of his name, until after the crucifixion, except in connection with the washing of feet and the denial. The one disciple whom Jesus personally calls, is Philip. And, upon the two occasions in which the names of Apostles are mentioned before the night of the betrayal, the two named are Andrew and Philip. It is not easy to account for this, for the suggestion made by M. Renan, that it is the expression of personal jealousy, has no meaning, except upon the assumption that the fourth Gospel is the work of the Apostle John; and, even upon that assumption, is, at least, gratuitous. Might it not be that Peter was still claimed by the Judaizing party in the Church as its especial head, and that, therefore, the anti-judaical author of the fourth Gospel wished to lessen the importance attached to him in the earlier tradition?

Or was it that claims to precedence and supremacy connected with the name of Peter had already begun to cast their ominous shadows over the scene? These are questions which, in our entire ignorance of the circumstances of the author, and of the precise time and place of the composition of the work, we are unable to answer. All that we can say is, that the position of Peter among the Apostles, and in relation to Jesus, is very different in the fourth from what it is in the first three Gospels, and by the uniform tradition of the Church, and that it is not probable this difference can be other than intentional.

It would be easy, but needless, to multiply these instances. The wild legend connected with the pool of Bethesda, of which no writer, Jewish or Christian, gives a hint¹—the assumption either that Peter was a disciple of John the Baptist—for otherwise he would not have been on the spot—or else that Bethabara, where John was baptizing, was so near to Galilee as that Andrew might see Peter while residing at home, the morning after a night spent with Jesus;—the statement that on the third day after the first appearance of Jesus, he had a known and recognised body of disciples, who were, as a matter of course, invited with him to the wedding feast—are only a few of the instances which shew that the work is not the production of an eyewitness, but of one who had no personal knowledge of the facts and but imperfect means of information. We need not enquire how far a contemporary narrative might be discredited on account of similar improbabilities. It may be that in such a case we should accept the story on account of the credit due to the writer. Or it may be that no single testimony, however seemingly unexceptionable, would suffice to outweigh them. And certainly this would be the case if we found that all the incidents to which our suspicions attached were connected with the doctrinal bias of the writer, and served to promote the object of his work. And we do find this in the fourth Gospel. Not

¹ Excepting, of course, such later Christian writers as have derived their materials from the fourth Gospel itself.

merely does all the evidence suggest that it was written at a later date and by an unknown author ; but its contents, apart from the miracles, conflict with historical probability and have a perceptible dogmatic object.

In attempting, therefore, to depict the life of the historical Jesus, we are unable to attach any weight to the fourth Gospel, either as a record of fact or of doctrine. In many particulars, however, it exhibits in details what is implied in, or may plausibly be deduced from, sayings of Jesus recorded in the Synoptical Gospels.¹ And the spiritual lessons it embodies—the mingled elevation and tenderness of the character of Jesus—the deep pathos of many of his utterances, especially of those on the evening preceding the crucifixion—and the description it gives of the intimate union subsisting between himself and the Father on the one hand, and himself and his disciples on the other, while they account for the speedy reception of the work, have made it probably the most influential of all the canonical writings in forming the prevalent conception of the nature and character of Jesus. And in these aspects it has an ideal truth that none can fail to recognise. But, on the other hand, there is no writing in the New Testament, excepting, perhaps, the Apocalypse, in which so much prominence is given to the separation between the Saints and the World ; none in which the virtue of Christian love is so distinctly restricted to those who form part of the Christian body ; none, therefore, that exhibits such a spirit of scorn and hostility towards all who are not members of one particular sect, or believers in one special creed. It has intensified love to the brethren, but only by narrowing the terms of brotherhood. And the recent attempt² to shew that God is not the Father of any but the elect, from which it necessarily follows that they alone are brethren, is little more than pushing to their remotest consequences some of the doctrines of this Gospel. Whether we should be bound to accept such views, even if we had reasonable grounds for

¹ Reuss, *Theologie Chrétienne*, vol. ii.

² By Dr. Candlish.

supposing that John was the author, may be a question. Apart from this, however, we may safely reject them, and, on the ground of our common humanity, continue to regard all mankind as our earthly brethren, and God as their, and our, heavenly Father.

C H A P T E R I I I.

THE SYNOPTICS.

OUR investigations so far have led us to the conclusion that the only reliable materials for the life of Jesus are to be found in the first three Gospels, and that no assistance is to be derived from the fourth. Our next subject of enquiry, then, must be the authority for these three Gospels.

This enquiry has two distinct aspects. Can we accept any one of our present Gospels as containing the original Gospel current in the Church of Jerusalem, or preached by Peter ; and if not, can we by their means recover the original Christian tradition? If we assume, with orthodox writers, that we possess the Synoptical Gospels in the form in which they were originally written, the first question must be answered in the negative. And, in that case, we must place their composition at a much later date than we have conjecturally assigned to them. We should, indeed, only be able to use them for the purpose of enabling us to answer the second. The point, therefore, to be decided is whether any of these gospels is an original work, into which interpolations have been subsequently introduced, capable with more or less certainty of being now pointed out ; or whether each is the work of a later writer availing himself, perhaps, of original materials, but selecting and combining these, and dealing freely with them in view of his own conception of the true character of the history. In the former case we may be able to proceed with a degree of confidence that is scarcely possible in the latter.

There are some general considerations, independent of any detailed enquiry, that appear to support the former view. Assuming, as we are almost compelled to do, that there was some original Gospel, it would certainly be more probable that it should be preserved and added to, than that it should be re-edited and destroyed. The former would be done piecemeal, at intervals, with no conscious perception of the ultimate result. And whatever authority belonged to the original portion would remain unaffected by the process; while each separate addition, inserted upon the report of some trusted brother, would be regarded almost from the first with the same respect that attached to the older part of the work in which it was incorporated. The latter would be a conscious and deliberate act, implying a degree of authority which probably no Christian would then venture to assume; and the new Gospel thus produced could not at once—probably would not at any time—acquire the confidence of the community. And, in addition to these motives, there would be the practical inducement, furnished by the labour and cost of copying manuscripts, to delay the necessity for this as long as might be practicable.

If, too, any Gospel were thus re-written, we should expect to find a softening down of obnoxious phrases and a modification of prophecies that in their actual form appeared to have been contradicted by the event, as well as the introduction of new matter. The first Gospel contains many sayings that could scarcely have been current in the Church after the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews; and any person who was composing the work anew for the purpose of bringing it up to the later standard of Christian opinion would, it may be supposed, have suppressed or softened these, instead of preserving them in their original form. It would not, perhaps, appreciably affect the results of our enquiry whether we were to suppose that the work was re-edited, preserving the original matter in its first form, but inserting new matter from other sources, or that the new portions were interpolated into the

older work. But, as a question of fact, the latter would seem to be incomparably more probable.

We have been so long accustomed practically to look at the New Testament as one work, and to regard the form in which it has existed for so many centuries as its original form, that it is not easy to place ourselves in a position to understand the mode of its formation. We scarcely realize that there was a time, after the death of Jesus, when no part of it existed, and a time during which it was being formed; nor that during these periods its various parts, at least the historical portions, possessed no peculiar sacredness or authority. And yet the former is, of course, an obvious fact, apparent upon the face of the work itself; and the latter is proved by an amount and variety of testimony that would be irresistible did it not conflict with impressions cherished by the whole Christian world; impressions received without investigation, but assumed to be raised above all need of proof. It would lead us too far from our present purpose to furnish proofs of this latter statement in detail. It is perhaps sufficient to say that none of the Gospels are cited with the formulae "as it is written" until after the middle of the second century, or upwards of one hundred and twenty years after the death of Jesus.¹

We might, in fact, refer for this purpose to the introduction to the third Gospel. It is obvious from this that the writer did not regard his authorities as possessing any greater sacredness than belongs to historical compositions in general, and it can scarcely be doubted that among these authorities were the first two Gospels, or the sources from which they were derived. He disclaims inspiration himself, and he implies in the clearest manner that he did not attribute inspiration to those who had written before him. Accordingly he deals freely with his materials—re-arranging, altering, omitting, and adding—so as to produce a narrative embodying his own individual conception

¹ Reuss, Hist. du Canon, chap. iii.

of the life and teaching of Jesus. And, from his example, we may be assured that no scruple would exist to prevent the fortunate possessor of an older Gospel from interlining, or adding on the margin, any speech or miracle not included in it that he might have learned from some authoritative source; or to prevent a copyist from inserting these additions in the text of the new copy. We learn from Jerome¹ that this was the practice even in his time with regard to the Latin version then in use, though the Canon had been long practically settled. And we may safely conclude that similar practices had prevailed before the Canon had assumed its actual form, or rather before the collection of writings that afterwards constituted it was formed. Such practices, however, could not prevail without gravely affecting the character of the writings upon which they were employed.

The purpose for which the Gospels were at first used, that, namely, of helping to circulate the traditional accounts through all the Churches,—and which were derived directly, or at second hand, from the Apostles,—would, of itself, favour the insertion of any new matter that might come to the knowledge of the owner of a copy; and there was no such sacredness attached to their character as to suggest the idea of fraud or wrong in inserting it. They were impersonal accounts, never referred to by the name of the author until the last quarter of the second century,—they were regarded as truthful, but there is not a single phrase in any previous writer to suggest that they were regarded as inspired. And, beside this, the text was fluctuating and unfixed. There is scarcely a quotation, before the year 180, that can be identified, absolutely, with any text in our existing Gospels. Sometimes, generally, in fact, they approach the first Gospel; sometimes the third; sometimes, but very rarely and doubtfully, they appear to contain reminiscences of the fourth; sometimes they are derived from an Apocryphal Gospel; and sometimes we are

¹ Ad Damasum Præfatio, cited in D'Eichthal, *Les Evangiles*, vol. i., p. 204.

unable to find any trace of their source. But there is never that precise identity which we have a right to expect in authors quoting from works whose form was settled and whose authority was recognized.

Of all the fathers before Irenæus and Tertullian, Justin has made the most numerous quotations from the historical narratives of the life of Jesus. He cites them, almost invariably, by the name of memorials (*απομνημονευμάτα*), and so copiously, that it has been said a tolerably complete life of Jesus might be made up from his quotations, almost in the language of one or other of the Synoptics. These quotations, however, though, for the most part capable of identification, exhibit, almost invariably, some verbal differences. If made from memory, as has been suggested, this would at least prove that neither Justin nor those whom he was addressing attached any special value to the letter of the record. But there are two circumstances which appear to render it improbable that this should have been the cause of the differences observed. In the first place, Justin has often occasion to cite the same passage more than once, and it is found that in these instances each such passage is almost uniformly cited in the same words. And this would scarcely be the case if the difference between the force of the quotation and our existing gospels was the result of inaccuracy of memory. And, in the second place, many of the same texts are cited by the author of the Clementine Recognitions, a work probably of nearly contemporaneous date, and in that case his citations agree almost always with those of Justin;—showing that both writers drew from a common source. The only inference is that though Christian tradition was becoming, or continued to be, fixed and uniform, the writings in which that tradition was embodied had not at that time assumed their ultimate shape.

This inference is again confirmed by the well-known “Codex Bezae.” Without pretending to offer any opinion as to the authority of that manuscript, it is impossible to suppose that it stood alone. It must represent a class of copies,—itself the

reproduction of some older manuscript that has now perished, and one of many similar exemplars made for the use of the Churches. It shows, therefore, how far the text of the Gospels was from being settled, even in the fifth or sixth century, to which it is supposed to belong.

Let us, then, suppose the good news of the Kingdom to be preached in Hippo, or in Carthage, by some followers of Paul. The announcement is that in a short time, almost certainly within the course of the existing generation, Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Romans had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead, would return to earth from the heaven whither he had ascended, to reward those who believed on him, and to take vengeance on his enemies. Such an announcement, especially when coupled with statements of his pre-existence, and of his voluntary submission to suffering and death for the sake of the faithful, would excite a lively curiosity as to the details of his human life. The readiest and most ample source of information upon this subject would be the living voice of those who had learned from the companions of Jesus the history of what he had said and done. This, however, though copious, was fleeting. The brethren, therefore, would naturally desire to procure some permanent record to which they might recur to correct or to confirm their recollection. Suppose that to such a Church a translation of the original Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, referred to by Papias, had been sent. If, now, they found in this an omission of sayings of Jesus of which they had heard from other sources, it is obvious that there was nothing in the nature of the work, or in the object for which it was procured, to prevent them from inserting these, and so making the memorial more complete. And still less would there be anything to restrain them from adding to it a description of the incidents of his public life—of the miracles he wrought, and the sufferings he endured.

We are apt to forget the difference in this respect between those days and the present. Now, memoirs are printed, and

hundreds or thousands possess a copy, each of which remains as a perpetual witness of any future alterations. Then, however, one copy would be as much as each Church would possess at the beginning. It would probably be only one copy of a single Gospel,—and only one or two members in the Church would be able to read it. Instead of forming a manual for study by the fireside or in the family, it was kept to be read at the weekly assembly of the congregation. The hearers, so far from complaining of any additions to its detail, would rather rejoice at the greater amount of information they were by this means enabled to possess ; and this process would continue so long as there was a living tradition.

It may, no doubt, be said, that such a representation of the practice of the different Churches is inconsistent with the fact that we have only four Gospels, instead of hundreds, as there would have been in that case. But this objection leaves out of sight two circumstances. First, that the original tradition with regard to the public life of Jesus was restricted within narrow bounds, and was watched over by the heads of the different Churches; and thus scarcely gave opportunity for any great variation. And, second, that the influence of the Church, when it adopted the Canonical Gospels as alone authoritative, would be employed to suppress all copies that departed, in any marked degree, from the version it had sanctioned. It is not possible, perhaps, to estimate the separate influence of each of these causes. With regard to the former, there is scarcely a trace in the writings of any of the early Fathers of any other incident relating to the public life of Jesus, excepting those mentioned in the Synoptical Gospels.¹ And with regard to

¹ The only additional circumstances appear to be that Jesus was born in a cavern; that the Magicians came from Arabia; that on the occasion of the baptism a fire was kindled on the Jordan; that the Jews regarded the miracles of Jesus as magical illusions; that not one of the Apostles came to his assistance when he was arrested, and that they all denied him till after the resurrection; and there is also a different account of the manner in which Judas met with his death—having been crushed by a cart in a narrow way. With regard to the sayings, there is that preserved by Papias and Irenæus, cited above, as to the “giant grapes” of Paradise; two from “Codex

the latter, there are strong grounds for supposing that it widely prevailed.¹ And, apart from any active measures for destroying copies that did not agree with the authorized version, the mere fact that they were not used in public readings, or admitted as an authority, would tend to their disuse by the orthodox and their consequent destruction. And, if any Church or party had persisted in using such copies they would, by reason of that very persistence, have been regarded as heretical, and their books would share the common fate of all heretical writings.

From these considerations we may, perhaps, conclude that although there is no certainty that we possess one of the Gospels in its original form, there is reason to believe that they all represent faithfully the Christian tradition of the first century after the death of Jesus; and that whatever alterations may have been made in the text, were made in good faith, and in order to render the work as correct and complete as possible. Still, such alterations may have, in effect, gravely modified the character of the work into which they were introduced, and may have changed the aspect or blurred the lineaments of Jesus as originally pourtrayed. It is, therefore, of direct practical moment to enquire whether the Gospels we possess retain their first form, and, if not, whether we can in any degree indicate the nature and extent of the changes they have undergone.

Bezae:" one, "Seek ye out of little to increase, and out of greater to become less;" and the other, the speech addressed to a man found writing on the Sabbath day, "Man, if thou knowest what thou doest happy art thou, but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the law;" one from the Epistle of Barnabas, "those who would receive my kingdom must be contrite and suffering, and so receive me;" one cited by many of the Fathers, "Be ye shrewd dealers;" and, from Justin, "There shall be divisions and heresies." "In whatever I find you, in that will I judge you." . "If you love them that love you what new thing do ye; do not even the harlots so?" It is, however, certain that if the works of Papias had not been opposed to the prevailing sentiment of the Church, and on that account allowed to perish, many more sayings of Jesus would have been preserved.

¹ The instance of Theodoret, who destroyed nearly two hundred copies of the "Diatessaron" (Reuss, Hist. du Canon, p. 74), and of Serapion who stopped the reading of the Gospel of Peter (Euseb. H. E., B. vi., c. 12), may be cited. The corresponding destruction, too, of the writings of Porphyry, shews the spirit by which the leaders of the Church were actuated.

And if, as we have some reason to conclude, the first Gospel is the earliest, it is obvious that such enquiry is most important with regard to that. There would be but a short time and little inducement to add to the third Gospel, itself a compilation of comparatively recent origin, and, therefore, presumably containing all that the compiler deemed authentic and interesting ; while the first Gospel, nearly half a century earlier in point of date, would certainly be exposed for a longer period, and would probably offer greater inducements to the work of alteration. And, if we could be sure of absolutely recovering the original text of the third Gospel, this would only put us in possession of the views taken by a writer of the beginning of the second century, probably seventy years after the death of Jesus ; while, if we could recover that of the first Gospel, we should be able to place ourselves at the point of view of the Church at a time when many of the Apostles were probably alive, and before the original tradition had been coloured by the admixture of foreign elements.

Upon a careful examination of the first Gospel it will be found to contain two dissimilar, if not conflicting, classes of ideas. On the one hand, Jesus is represented as basing his instructions upon the law, and proclaiming its inviolability and permanence. His teaching differs from that of the Scribes and Pharisees in this—that he separates the form from the substance, and distinguishes between the spirit and the letter. He prescribes keeping the commandments as the means of gaining Eternal life ; and those commandments are the decalogue and the command to love God from Deuteronomy, and to love your neighbour from Leviticus. He denounces ritualism—which then threatened to stifle Judaism as it has at times almost stifled Christianity—not, indeed, with the purpose of teaching indifference to the fulfilment of all legal requirements, but in order that these should not satisfy the soul, as though their observance could dispense with the weightier matters of law,—justice, mercy, and faith. While expressly sanctioning submission to Rome

in purely civil matters, administrative and revenue, by the emphatic declaration: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," he equally excludes that submission in all matters pertaining to religion by the equally emphatic phrase: "And to God the things that are God's." And this last phrase, as uttered by him after his public entry into Jerusalem in the character of King, and addressed to Jews, must have been intended and understood to refer to the requirements of the Jewish law; and in accordance with this we find him confining his own mission, and that of his Apostles, to the Jews.¹ His coming kingdom, too, is to be Jewish. In that kingdom the Apostles are to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and, before Pilate, he recognizes his own title to be King of the Jews. And he even excludes Gentiles from the fellowship of his disciples: "Let him be to thee as a Gentile² and a publican."

These passages,—and they represent the general aspect of the work,—exhibit Jesus in the character of a Jewish prophet and reformer; recognizing the claims of the Jewish law and the prerogatives of the Jewish people, but elevating the one, and liberalizing the other. By the side of these, however, are others of an entirely different character. Among these we may notice the speech attributed to John the Baptist;³ the history of the centurion of Capernaum; the parables that shadow forth the rejection of the Jews, and the assertion that the kingdom of God shall be taken from them,⁴ and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of righteousness; and, more than all, the command to make disciples of the Gentiles, by the mere act of baptizing them into the name of the Father,

¹ Matt. x., 5, 6; xv., 24.

² Matt. xviii., 17. Not heathen, which expresses the later opposition between Christians and those of the nations who had not joined the Church.

³ Matt. iii., 6-11. This appears, indeed, to be limited to the Pharisees and Sadducees; but the phrase, "think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham for our father," etc., applied equally to the whole people.

⁴ Matt. xxi., 43.

and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And the question we have to determine is, whether we are to consider this obvious contrast between the character of different portions of the book as a part of its original composition, or as the result of such interpolations as we have shown to be, at least, possible.

This question, it will be observed, is altogether distinct from that whether these latter passages formed a part of the actual teaching of Jesus, though having, no doubt, an important bearing upon it. We may believe that Jesus used the words attributed to him, and yet it might be improbable that a writer, who, in the greater portion of his work, has represented the Jews as the inheritors of the kingdom, and Jesus as so peculiarly the prophet and Messiah of Israel, should have inserted these other passages. The one enquiry, whether Jesus actually employed language implying the entire rejection of the Jews and admission of the Gentiles, is one upon which we are not yet prepared to enter. The other, whether that language was recorded in the first Gospel, we shall briefly examine.

The time at which we suppose the first Gospel to have been written was within a few years of the tumult at Jerusalem that led to the imprisonment of Paul and his voyage to Rome; and the tradition that it represents must have been in process of formation during the preceding quarter of a century. We have already stated, and shall further on give additional reasons for our conclusion, that the story in the Acts cannot be accepted as true; still, it affords indications of the light in which the early history of the Church was regarded at the commencement of the second century, and it has never been suspected of exaggerating the judaical tendencies of the Church at Jerusalem. The description of that Church, immediately after the death of Jesus, and to the close of the history given in the Acts, is, however, such as we might anticipate if his teaching had, in fact, been such as is represented in the first Gospel, excluding those passages which speak of the rejection of the Jews in favour of the Gentiles. Thus Peter, speaking to the

Jews, says : "The promise is unto you and your children;"¹ not, indeed, exclusively, for with them were to be joined as many as God should call of them that were afar off,—but primarily. And, again, "Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with Abraham."² So Jesus is a "Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel."³ The speech attributed to Stephen, too, is eminently Jewish, and, so far as we can judge, could have excited opposition only because of his vehement denunciation of the rulers for having procured the crucifixion of Jesus, and of the horror excited by what was deemed his blasphemous assertion,—that he saw Jesus, as the Son of Man, seated at the right hand of God.⁴ And in the persecution that follows his death, the Apostles remain in Jerusalem apparently undisturbed.

Up to this period there is no indication in the Acts of the Apostles, or in fact anywhere, of any other difference between the followers of Jesus—not yet known as Christians⁵—and the rest of the Jews, than that which arose from the assertion by the one party that Jesus was the Messiah, and its denial by the other. Jesus was to return to the earth, visibly, as he had left it, and the kingdom he was expected to found was to be a restoration of the kingdom to Israel. And, till his coming, none but Jews or those who submitted to be circumcised were to be

¹ Acts ii., 39.

² Acts iii., 25.

³ Acts v., 31, and elsewhere.

⁴ The speech of Stephen cannot be regarded as historical. Independently of all other grounds of doubt, it had no relation to the charge of which he was accused—that of asserting that Jesus of Nazareth should destroy Jerusalem and put an end to the Mosaic economy. Possibly this was the true charge, and probably he might have given occasion for it. His speech asserts the divine origin, and implies the permanence of the Mosaic dispensation; since the charge against the rulers is, that having received the law by the disposition of angels, they had not kept it. And if the assertion of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of his resurrection and ascension into heaven, had been the grounds of the death of Stephen, and of the persecution of the Church, it is not easy to understand how the Apostles could have remained in Jerusalem.

⁵ This phrase would have been unmeaning at Jerusalem, when almost all the Jews were waiting for the appearance of the Messiah=Christ. The distinction between the brethren and the rest of the Jews was probably expressed by the term Nazarene, or Galilean.

baptised into His name.¹ In accordance with these indications is the speech reported to have been made several years later to Paul at Jerusalem, when he was told that there were many thousands of Jews who believed, who were all zealots for the law, implying, what in fact necessarily results from their peaceful abode in Jerusalem, that they regarded the profession of faith in Jesus as compatible with the continued performance of every Jewish rite, and even as justifying, or perhaps requiring a peculiar zeal for their observance. It was, indeed, to be expected that they should attach importance to an economy which, as they believed, was soon to be rendered pre-eminent and all-embracing, by the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, with Jesus for its monarch, Jerusalem for its capital, and themselves for its chief citizens. And it is only necessary to realize the state of feeling with regard to the obligation and sanctity of the law that then existed in Jerusalem, and throughout Judæa, as exhibited in the History of Josephus, and still more forcibly in the actual revolt of the Jews and the heroic defence of the city, to understand that no sect could dwell there in peace if they had held and taught that the coming kingdom was to be composed principally of Gentiles—that the law of Moses was to be abolished, and that the Jews, of whom the Messiah was to come, were to be excluded.

The Church at Jerusalem, then, was composed exclusively of Jews, and they could not have resided there unless they had been—which our only authority on the subject declares that they were—zealous for the law. It follows that they understood that the kingdom which Jesus was to found was to be a Jewish kingdom, though open to such Gentiles as might be attracted by its splendour, or awed by its power, and who would enter it by the prescribed method of circumcision. It is, consequently,

¹ This results necessarily from the account given of the controversy occasioned by the eating with Cornelius. The distinctive Christian rite was the Lord's Supper, in which all believers would share. And the accusation against Peter was, that he had eaten with one who had been baptised, but not circumcised, implying that in the opinion of the brethren no one before circumcision would be admitted to this meal.

impossible that a book composed for the edification of that Church by one of its members should have contained an account of speeches of Jesus, teaching in language impossible to be misunderstood, that the Kingdom of Heaven should be taken from them, the children of the kingdom, and given to the Gentiles. For, if such had been the case,—if they who had heard Jesus knew that he had uttered such predictions, and if those who had joined the Church after his death had been instructed that such had been his teaching—what would avail to them their Jewish birth and creed—what that they were descended from the Father of the faithful and possessed the Seal of the Covenant? Nay—why should they value themselves upon a nationality that was to be the symbol of exclusion from the kingdom for which they were waiting, or be zealous for a law that was so soon to be abrogated?¹ We must be certain, consequently, that if the Church of Jerusalem possessed any record of the teaching of Jesus, that record contained nothing inconsistent with their continued belief in the restoration of the Jewish kingdom, and the permanence of the Jewish law.²

This reasoning, no doubt, does not necessarily shew that these anti-judaical passages are interpolations in the first Gospel. It may be said that this is not the work of which Papias speaks, but a later compilation made by some unknown disciple at an uncertain date, the author of which drew his materials from more than one source, and embodied not merely the traditions current among the judaizing portion of the disciples, which exhibited Jesus in the light of the Jewish Messiah, but those also current among Gentile converts, which prefigured the trial and rejection of the Jews. Possibly this is the case. In that event, however, we should be compelled to assume that the date of the

¹ Which in fact was abrogated, so far as the Church was concerned, by the command to make disciples of all nations by the sole ceremony of baptism.

² This shows the fallacy of the argument that the fourth Gospel is entitled to authority as containing the traditions of Jerusalem as distinct from those of Galilee. If that Gospel were, in fact, founded upon an independent tradition, it must have sprung up in exclusively Christian circles, and outside of the limits of Palestine.

first Gospel was later than that we have conjecturally assigned to it—later, in fact, than that of the second: and that the second is really the original narrative upon which the two other Synoptical Gospels have been moulded.

There is, no doubt, much to be said in favour of this latter view. It may be fairly argued that the second Gospel bears upon its face the marks of having been composed for Gentile churches, and that it would be for such churches that a written history would be first needed. The omission of all the peculiarly Jewish elements of the teaching of Jesus—of the prominence he gives to the Mosaic law as the rule of conduct and the pathway to life eternal—of the limitation of his own mission and that of his disciples to the Jews—of his emphatic declaration that he came not to destroy but to fulfil the law—and of the promise to the Apostles that they should sit in his kingdom as judges of the tribes of Israel—coupled with the occasional explanations of sayings that, though obvious enough to Jews, would have, otherwise, been unintelligible to Gentiles—shew with sufficient clearness that it was destined for these latter. And that while the Jewish brethren, among whom the Apostles generally resided, would need no written record, the Gentiles, who could for the most part hear of Jesus only at second hand, would almost from the beginning require some permanent memorial of the traditions of the Church. And that the omission, in a Gospel composed for such readers, of the anti-judaic elements of the first Gospel—the express predictions that the Jews should be cast out, and their kingdom given to Gentiles—is a proof that it was composed before these assumed predictions had obtained currency in the Church.

And if we were called upon to decide between the first and the second Gospels in their actual form, it would certainly appear that the preponderance of argument would be in favour of the priority of the second. This conclusion, however, while accounting for some of the phenomena, leaves others unexplained, and creates almost as many difficulties as it removes.

We can scarcely, therefore, adopt it, if any other probable solution of the problem can be found. And such a solution seems to be furnished by the suggestion that the second Gospel is, indeed, founded upon the first, to which additions had been subsequently made.

We are not, perhaps, entitled to rely implicitly upon the testimony of Papias. Still, it is difficult to suppose that during all the years in which the church at Jerusalem remained under the rule of the Apostles, there was no record made for its use of the teaching of Jesus, at least, of the more prominent incidents of his public career. Apart from the natural desire of those living in Jerusalem, who had never known him before his visit to that city, to learn the details of his previous history and the doctrines he had taught in Galilee, it is obvious that the authority attached to his lessons among the members of the infant community would lead to some attempt to reduce these into a definite form and to preserve them by writing. And any report of his discourses would ultimately be accompanied by some statement of the circumstances under which they were delivered, that would gradually tend to embrace all the more prominent incidents of his life. At this time the supremacy of the Church at Jerusalem was firmly established, even if it were not altogether unquestioned. The Gospel, therefore, received in that Church would be the leading authority for the life and teaching of Jesus, and the natural source from which all subsequent compilers would draw. And it would be carried to all Gentile churches to which messengers from Jerusalem might be sent, as the "Gospel" which the Apostles had been commissioned by Jesus to preach.

If such were the case, there can be no ground for supposing the second to be the original Gospel. Our conclusion in this respect might, no doubt, be modified if the first two Gospels stood in no relation of dependence one to the other. Even then, indeed, there would be great difficulty in supposing the second to be the original form of the evangelical

narrative composed for the use of the Gentiles, for it is clear, from the writings of Paul, that he had everywhere to contend against the judaizing aspect given to the mission of Jesus by those who came from Jerusalem ; and to warn, too often without success, the churches he had founded against their tendency to yield to this teaching. If, then, they had any narrative composed for their use, it must have been in accordance with the views that Paul opposed.¹ There can be no doubt that either the first is derived from the second, or the second from the first. And, if so, unless we can believe that there was no "Gospel" current in the Church at Jerusalem before the destruction of the city, we cannot, it would seem, avoid the conclusion that the first is the original, and the second an abridged and altered copy. But, then,—as we must assume this abridgement to have been made for the use of later Gentile converts, and to have been adapted to this purpose by the omission of those portions of the first Gospel that give a narrow and exclusive aspect to the teaching of Jesus, and appeared to cut off the Gentiles, as such, from a participation in his kingdom,—it is difficult to assign a reason for the omission of those passages that predict the calling in of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews. The only probable supposition appears to be, that they did not form a part of the first Gospel at the time that the second was composed.

We may perhaps conclude that the collection of the sayings of Jesus attributed to Matthew was not a private work, and that it was not completed at once. Probably indeed the mode

¹ It has often been assumed, almost as a matter of course, that the first Gospel for the Gentiles would soften down the judaical aspect of the teaching of Jesus, and rather tend to depreciate the law. The very reverse would have been the case, unless we suppose that there was no such Gospel written until after the dispersion of the Church at Jerusalem, for the main object of that Church was to impose the law upon all new converts, and no Gospel would be likely to possess any authority without its sanction. We may infer that those who "troubled" the Church at Galatia, who "came from James" to Antioch, who brought "letters of commendation" to the Church at Corinth, based their doctrines upon the report of the Apostle as to what was the teaching of Jesus, and, if so, it was probably written for the purposes of authentication.

of its formation was analogous to that of the Koran—fresh portions being added from time to time as circumstances appeared to demand them. When, after the death of Jesus, the new society began to acquire numbers and consistency, it would be necessary to have some rules for its guidance; and these would be naturally derived from the lessons he had taught in his lifetime. In his public discourses in Galilee, in his private communications to the disciples, in his answers to his adversaries, he had furnished precepts regulating the conduct to be pursued by those who were desirous to prepare themselves for entering the kingdom, and had also laid down principles capable of being applied in all ordinary contingencies. And these would probably be committed to writing for the guidance of the brethren. To this first period we may no doubt refer the greater part of the Sermon on the Mount, many of the parables relating to the Kingdom of Heaven, the rule as to divorce, and the command to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. And then, as new questions arose, whether connected with the relations of the society to its own members, or to the Gentiles, or to the law, we may conceive that when the Apostles met for the purpose of deciding upon the course to be pursued, one of the first enquiries would be whether Jesus in his life time had said anything applicable to the point in dispute. If any such saying was remembered by one of their number that commended itself to the recollection of the rest, this would be received as decisive, and would be added to the record. No report of the teaching of Jesus would be likely to possess any authority among the brethren, or would even be allowed to circulate, unless it was sanctioned by the Apostles as a body. And it is very probable that Matthew, whose previous avocations would make him a readier scribe than the others, might act as amanuensis, or, as we should now say, secretary to his colleagues.

Some such hypothesis as this appears to be required in order to account for the peculiar character of many of the passages,

which have little or no meaning as attributed to Jesus at the time they are supposed to have been spoken, but have an obvious bearing upon questions that we know to have arisen afterwards. We may allow that all these additions were made in good faith and in a full belief in their accuracy, though in fact they must have been deeply tinged by the feeling of the moment. It would carry us beyond our present purpose to attempt to exhibit the traces of this process in detail. Some will present themselves in the course of our subsequent investigations. And a careful analysis of the whole Gospel, even with our imperfect knowledge of the circumstances of the infant community, would probably enable us to assign a place to nearly all the sayings recorded, excepting in those instances where they plainly appear to have been interpolated.¹

If we might add one conjecture to the many that have been made upon this subject, it would be that the original of the first Gospel was a combination of the "Logia" of Matthew and the "Memorabilia" of Mark, composed in Greek almost immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem—the Logia having been completed a year or two previously;—that the second Gospel, which we probably possess almost in its original form, was abridged from this a few years later for the use of Gentile converts, who began to find some portions of the original Gospel unsuitable;—that the third was a free compilation from the two others, and from independent sources, about the beginning of the second century;—and that the first has subsequently been largely interpolated. This view, at least, appears to satisfy all the conditions of the problem.

¹ There is one to which we may now refer—the latter part of the answer of Jesus to the disciples of John when they enquire the reason for the neglect of fasting by his disciples (Matt. ix., 15, "The time shall come when the bridegroom is taken from them and then they shall fast"). This, as reported, is inconsistent with the position of Jesus at the time and with his subsequent conduct, and can hardly be regarded as anything but a justification of the practice of fasting by the brethren, in opposition to the rule observed and enforced by Jesus himself.

CHAPTER IV.

PROBABILITIES.

THERE remain some general considerations affecting the credibility of the Gospel narratives, principally in connection with the miracles related, and the inferences which we may draw as to the character of the mission and teaching of Jesus from the subsequent history of the Church, to which we may shortly refer.

The question of miracle has two aspects—theological and evidential. The one regards the orthodox view of the nature of Jesus; the other, the testimony upon which the assumed miracle rests. Under the former aspect, however, it may be a question how far the common view is well founded. The miracles related to have been wrought by Jesus are frequently referred to as a proof of his superhuman, or of his divine nature. And, at the same time, it is admitted—we should rather say asserted—that similar miracles were performed by individuals, who, like Peter and Paul, were mere men, having no miraculous power in themselves. If, indeed, it could be contended that the performance of miracles was the result of prerogative faculty, possessed by Jesus by virtue of his divinity, it might be possible to draw conclusions from the assertion or denial of this faculty that would not be applicable to miracles supposed to have been performed by others, who were men and nothing more. As, however, the same authority that testifies to the working of miracles by Jesus, testifies also to the working of similar miracles by those who have no pretensions to divinity, it is clear that such

acts cannot be regarded as manifesting the divine nature of their performer; and, consequently, that to doubt or deny them does not really affect the grounds upon which it is believed that Jesus was God. If we are convinced, by a perusal of the New Testament narratives, that Jesus cast out devils, cured those that were lunatic, gave sight to the blind, strength to the lame, and life to the dead,—this is no proof of his Godhead. We cannot, indeed, regard these acts as even related to his Godhead, so long as we believe, upon the same evidence, that miracles of the same kind were wrought by the Apostles; still less if we believe, with the Church of Rome, that similar miracles continue to be wrought to the present day. These acts, therefore, are a part of his human life; of what he did as a man—as a teacher sent from God, and “approved of God, by miracles, and wonders, and signs that God did by him.” And, as such, though they may be referred to in proof of his doctrine, for those to whom such proof is valid, they have no connection with the orthodox view as to his nature.

The question thus presented for our solution, apart from any *à priori* objections to miracles in themselves, which may be waived for the present, is altogether one of the weight of evidence. It rests upon the same grounds, and must be decided by the same tests as would be applied to any other historical question. And the form it must ultimately assume is this. Is the amount of testimony to any alleged miracle such as to outweigh the antecedent improbability arising out of the nature of the occurrence. If it is not, we need not pursue the investigation further. If it is, we should then be compelled to enquire whether the facts related necessarily implied a violation of the order of Nature. And only upon the assumption of its being impossible otherwise to account for them, should we have to discuss the question whether any testimony could be sufficient to prove such a violation.

Sometimes the question has been argued as though there was an inconsistency in such a course on the part of any one

who was not prepared to reject the Gospel history throughout, if he does not accept the truth of every event it relates, miracles included.¹ It is said that we have no right to afford a qualified belief to these statements, and that we are bound to accept or reject them as a whole. This, however, is not the practice of mankind in their ordinary affairs. On the contrary, they have learned that there is probably no narrative so accurate as that some particulars will not be admitted owing to imperfect knowledge, or some inserted that are due, in part at least, to the imagination of the relator; and that scarcely any one is so entirely false as not to have some element of fact for its basis. In all cases, therefore, men instinctively make such corrections of the story as their knowledge of surrounding circumstances, or of the mental bias of the narrator, or their ideas of probability may suggest, without for a moment suspecting that they are acting inconsistently. And if this is the case with regard to contemporary narratives, much more are such corrections needed in reference to histories composed, partly from recollection and partly from hearsay, twenty to thirty years after the events they relate, and in a different place from that in which they had happened.

Take, then, the first Gospel. The original appears from internal evidence to have assumed its complete form somewhere about thirty years after the death of Jesus, and to have represented the current tradition in the Church. From the circumstance that Jerusalem was up to that time the residence of the Apostles, and the centre of the Church, it was probably composed there for the use of the new converts. The events it relates took place during the life of Jesus, and for the most part in Galilee. It can hardly be contended that, looking upon this as a history, we should not be justified in estimating the credit to which it is entitled by a consideration of the probability of the events related, and in according belief to the

¹ Among others, by the late Isaac Taylor in his "Restoration of Belief."

writer in some particulars, while supposing him to have been mistaken or misinformed in others. And, with regard to the corroboration that the accounts of miracles in the first Gospel may appear to derive from the circumstance of their being repeated, or of similar incidents being related, in one or more of the others, it is a very obvious remark, but one that seems scarcely to have occurred to orthodox writers, that, when two or more narratives bear the mark of being copied, the one from the other, the events they relate have no greater claim to be regarded as authentic because of their agreement, and that, when they relate different events, each such event rests solely upon the authority of the one writer, subject to such deductions as may be due to the circumstance that others in writing the same biography have either not known, or not thought it important, to record the occurrence. And almost every miracle recorded in the Gospels falls within the one class or the other.

The evidence, then, in support of the actual performance of the miracles attributed to Jesus is, that thirty years after his death an account of miracles alleged to have been wrought by him in Galilee was current in Jerusalem among the members of the sect that regarded him as the Messiah. From this it is argued that it was sanctioned by James and those of the Apostles who then resided there, and, consequently, has all the weight due to the report of eye-witnesses. How far the latter inference is well founded must be considered an open question. There is certainly nothing in the Epistle of James or in the First Epistle of Peter¹ to show that they knew of any miracle wrought by Jesus. And this, if we could accept these Epistles as genuine, would be a clear proof that their claim in his behalf to the faith of the Church was not necessarily founded upon his exercise of miraculous power. Assuming, however, that

¹ We may leave out of consideration the Second Epistle of Peter, as a history shown by both internal and external evidence to belong to the latter half of the second century.

the Apostles in Jerusalem, Peter and James and John, those who "seemed to be pillars," had known and sanctioned these statements, we may still doubt how far that sanction implies their personal guarantee to the accuracy of every incident related. It is not absolutely unprecedented in ecclesiastical history that the leaders of a movement should sanction and encourage reports of marvels which, though not true, were nevertheless adapted to stimulate the zeal of their followers, and thus to accelerate the progress of their cause. And even if they had thus attested the accuracy of the statements, it may still be a question how far their attestation would compel us to believe in the reality of occurrences that are represented as violating the order of nature. The assumption that they did so is, however, purely gratuitous. It rests upon no evidence. And it is scarcely consistent with the variations which the history so speedily underwent.

Admitting then, as we fully admit, the good faith of the author of the first Gospel—that he invented nothing and inserted nothing that was not currently reported among the brethren, can we have such confidence in his judgment, or in the judgment and accuracy of those from whose mouths he collected his materials, as to be able to rely implicitly upon his history, even where he confines himself within the limits of the natural? Is it not rather a matter of every-day experience that, in the course of transmission from mouth to mouth, the form and character of events are changed; partly as the result of unconscious variation in every fresh repetition, partly by the invention of incidents which, because they, as it were, round off the story and give it a greater appearance of consistency or completeness, it is assumed must have happened; and partly under the influence of feelings that seek to aggrandize the object of affection or veneration, or of both. And, then, these causes of change, and therefore of error, will so blend with each other that it will be always difficult, and often impossible, to suggest the probable share of each in producing

the ultimate result. There are abundant instances of the utter untruthfulness of stories that find their way into history, and are, for a time, regarded as unquestioned truths. And many of these will, probably, be received as such by posterity, in spite of their detection and exposure, because they harmonize with the prevailing sentiment of the nation or class to which they were originally addressed.

The story told by Foxe, in his "Book of Martyrs," of "one Greenwood," who, as a perjured person and a great persecutor, had been struck dead by the hand of God, and the use made of it by a preacher, as an illustration of divine justice, in a sermon that he preached in the hearing of Greenwood himself, who, by his living presence, offered a convincing practical refutation of its truth, has been preserved for us in a legal decision.¹ The case of the Vengeur; the accounts circulated through the press of the mutilations of Englishmen in India during the Sepoy mutiny; the innumerable apocryphal anecdotes current, about half a century ago in England, with regard to the Duke of Wellington,—and, in France, with regard to the first Napoleon, shew the facility with which, even among contemporaries, stories spring up and obtain credence, for which, in their actual form, there is no foundation whatever. Or compare Napier's History of the Peninsular War with Thiers' narrative of the same event,—or the accounts of the Battle of Waterloo, according as the author is English or French or Prussian, and it will be easy to understand that even access to original documents, and the ordeal of publicity, afford no guarantee of a complete and reliable history, but that the narrative will take its colour from the bias of the writer or of the authorities he follows, or of those for whom it is written, and whom consequently it must please. And, there is no reason to believe, that the various influences that shape tradition, and recount facts, and colour narratives, were less active or powerful

¹ C. 20 : Jar. 21, Prick's Case.

during the first quarter of a century after the death of Jesus than they are now.

Nor must we forget, in estimating the effect of these influences, how strong was the tendency to ascribe every unwonted occurrence to supernatural causes, and to attribute the power of working miracles to distinguished men. It was not merely Jesus and the Apostles that were believed by the early Christians to have had this power; for, apart from its continuing exercise within the Church, Justin¹ attributes a similar power to Simon Magus, and to his successor, Menander,—the difference being, that in the one case the wonderful works are ascribed to the divine help, and in the other to the agency of evil spirits. The miracles, too, ascribed to Vespasian and to Apollonius of Tyana, are additional illustrations of the same tendency, which is nowhere more signally displayed than in the belief—then almost universal—that by magical incantations men might even control the heavenly bodies and the elements. It is true that, in the centres of ancient civilization, a small class had raised itself above the influence of these ideas, and could smile at the popular credulity; but their numbers were few and their influence limited. Outside of that narrow circle all the old beliefs subsisted. The last thing that would have occurred to an ordinary mind, whether Jew or Gentile, would have been to attempt a rational explanation of unusual occurrences—sudden recoveries from sickness, sudden or unusual forms of death, lunacy, epilepsy, uncommon or widely prevailing diseases, famines, earthquakes, meteors, comets—these were all attributed to the direct operation of unseen powers. Supernatural agency, in fact, was looked upon as the complement of nature, and there was no distinct or intelligible boundary between them. Whatever was exceptional was on that very account regarded as, probably, supernatural. In such an atmosphere it would be almost a matter of course that the early

¹ Eusebius, II. E., Book II., c. 13.

disciples should ascribe to Jesus the performance of miracles, and that such miracles should be accepted without enquiry by the Church.

There are still two other considerations that it is incumbent upon us to keep in mind when we attempt to draw conclusions from the Gospel histories. In the first place, the original disciples belonged almost exclusively to the lower classes. "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," were numbered in their ranks. They would have, consequently, the habits and feelings and prejudices of their class. They would neither possess the wider range of thought resulting from an acquaintance, even superficial, with literature or philosophy—nor the practical experience of men and things that the management of large affairs tends to supply. They might have—many, no doubt, had—deep spiritual insight and an elevated piety. And some of them must have possessed more than ordinary faculties of organization and management. But the majority—those among whom the traditions were formed and for whom the Gospels were originally composed—were in no otherwise distinguished from the class to which they belonged than by their belief in Jesus. There would, therefore, be naturally—we might almost say necessarily—a misconception of the motives of their rulers, and a disposition to attribute public events to petty intrigues or to mere personal motives. Assuming that the feelings of the class did not tinge their report of the sayings of Jesus himself, which some among them had heard—and this is perhaps more than we have a right to assume—we must still conclude that they were not inoperative in shaping their description of the conduct of his enemies. The relations we have received sprung up in the midst of a community whose members were poor, ignorant, and enthusiastic; and, regarded as materials for history, must be subject to a corresponding deduction.

And, again, these relations never encountered the test of publicity until long after the death of the generation that wit-

nessed the events they describe. The Christian books, wherever composed, belonged to Christians, and were for many years entirely confined to the brethren.¹ There is not a trace in Jewish or heathen literature of the existence of these books, of the incidents they relate, or of the doctrines they teach. Those who wrote had no fear of contradiction, and there was no necessity for such an investigation into the actual facts as might secure them against hostile criticism. They were free to give such a character to their work as should accord with their own object in writing, or as might harmonise with the sentiment of those for whom they wrote. And, however honest they might be in intention, this immunity from criticism and contradiction removed one of the most powerful incentives to scrupulous accuracy. It is impossible, therefore, to place the same reliance upon works thus composed that we should yield to works which, by challenging hostile examination, furnished, at least, a presumption that their writers believed they could stand that test.

The questions we have thus been discussing are, however, generally argued by orthodox writers, as though the first generation of Christians possessed some peculiar and exceptional qualities that rendered them inaccessible to the ordinary weaknesses of humanity, which would, therefore, be to us a guarantee that whatever they accepted as true, might safely be received as true by ourselves. Not such is the picture that has been drawn for us by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. It is not as the spotless bride of the lamb—humble, reverend, loving, truthful, waiting in patient but joyous anticipation for the expected appearance of the heavenly bridegroom—that the Church is revealed to us in his writings; though it is, in no small degree, to his elevated conception and glowing description of the Christian ideal that the prevalent errors upon this subject are due. On the contrary, the actual churches he addresses are

¹ The Sacred books of the Christians were not published to the world in general, but were reserved and precious possessions of the believing societies. (Alford's N. T. for English Readers, Introduct. Chap. i. sect. v. 1).

torn by dissensions; underrating the importance of the essentially Christian virtues, and valuing themselves upon the possession of so-called spiritual gifts, the exhibition of which might lead a bystander to believe them mad; easily led astray; greedy of novelty, and ready to accept fables for truth; attaching importance to outward observances, days and times and ceremonies; and clutching, as it were, at some legal support because they were unable to maintain themselves in the elevated region into which he had for the moment raised them. Such were the Gentile churches. And, with regard to the Church at Jerusalem, we know from the same writings that it was not merely the stronghold of the Judaical party, but that it strove actively to impose the obligations of the Jewish law upon all believers, and even denied that any could enter the kingdom of heaven excepting through the gate of the law.

On the one side was freedom always ready to degenerate into lawlessness, and, in the reaction against this tendency, prepared to ally itself with ceremonialism; and, on the other, a fanatical legalism, investing forms with a sacredness that made them a substitute for the weightier matters of the law. And, above these, were Paul on the one hand, and James on the other, striving, and too often ineffectually, to impress from their different points of view the essential truths they held in common.

But, when such were the churches, can we be quite sure that their leaders were altogether superior to these disturbing influences? Are we not rather driven to the conclusion that they also, "men of like passions" with those whom they taught, proved this community of weakness by occasional lapses into error, and even by some prevailing errors being mingled with and alloying the truths they held. Such, at least, appears to be the lesson which any one who can read the New Testament freed from the pre-conceptions that result from early training, must learn from its perusal. And, at least, this is clear, that the currency of a narrative among the members of such a Church furnishes no ground

for our accepting it either as guaranteed by the Apostles, or as absolutely true.

There is yet another question that we may shortly examine before proceeding with our attempt to depict the life of Jesus. Can we, from the course of events in the Church itself, form any probable conclusion as to the nature of His teaching? Was it in accordance with the view taken by the twelve, and by the Church at Jerusalem, or with that taken by Paul? Or was it of a composite character, containing elements capable of being assimilated by both, and thus laying the foundation of the divisions that actually occurred? If we adopt the Synoptical Gospels as a faithful record of the teaching of Jesus, the latter is the case. He would have given a direct sanction to those of his disciples who refused to recognize Gentile converts unless they conformed to all the requirements of the Jewish law, and he would, by anticipation, have condemned Paul, who taught the nullity of these rites and the insignificance of ceremonial observances. For, had he not said, speaking to Jews, "Think not I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all (things) be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." And had he not, by telling his disciples to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath day, implied that the law would continue to be binding upon them? And, on the other hand, had he not taught in plain terms the rejection of the Jews and admission of the Gentiles unconditionally; and, in his final interview with his apostles, had he not left it to them as his last emphatic command, that they should make disciples

of all nations, by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost? And in these utterances might be found an abundant authority for all that Paul preached as his Gospel, or claimed on behalf of his converts.

This solution, however, suggests two further questions. Is it probable that the same person should have taught so emphatically doctrines thus opposed to each other?—and, How did it happen that the Apostles who had heard of all these discourses were influenced by those of the former class only, and appear to have been altogether ignorant of the latter? The former question may be passed over for the present. Many circumstances of time and place and audience, of which we are now ignorant, may have affected the character of the teaching of Jesus, or there may have been a development of his own views. We should have no right, therefore, to refuse to believe upon adequate evidence that both doctrines were taught, in spite of their apparent or even real inconsistency. The latter question is one of much greater weight and difficulty, and demands a careful investigation.

We need not repeat what we have already said as to the character of the Acts of the Apostles. No one can read it without seeing that, according to the views of the writer, the very admission of Gentiles into the society was a question of great doubt, and that the terms upon which they were to be admitted were assumed at first as a matter of course to be that they should submit to all the requirements of the law; and that these terms were only modified after grave deliberation by the Apostles with the sanction of the brethren. It is also further noticeable that neither in the Epistles of Paul, nor in the report of the discussions at Jerusalem, nor, in fact, throughout the Acts, is there one reference to any saying of Jesus on the subject. This is not, perhaps, singular in the case of Paul, who had never known Jesus, and who boasts that he learned nothing on the subject from those who had known him; but it is surely significant on the part of the author of the Acts. It

is, at least, difficult to understand that Peter should be represented as requiring an enigmatical vision, and the actual outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius, before he could venture to baptise him ; and the Apostles described as prefacing their alleged decision by the statement, that it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to them, if there had been anything in the teaching of Jesus himself, capable of being appealed to as an authority with the stricter brethren, that had authorised such a relaxation.

And it must not be forgotten that Stephen, the first martyr, who would seem to have suffered for blasphemies against the holy place and the law—these blasphemies being a prediction that Jesus should destroy the place and change the customs that Moses committed unto them (this at least was the charge stated to have been made against him)—had not, so far as appears, any more than Paul, known Jesus ; and that after his death the Apostles are described as remaining in peace at Jerusalem. This would hardly have occurred, or have been reported to have occurred, if the doctrines attributed to Stephen had truly represented the teaching of the Apostles themselves ; for, in that case, they would, as the recognised heads of the new society, have been the principal objects of attack. The only solution seems to be that the Apostles “had not so heard Jesus.”

But, then, if in fact the Apostles who had accompanied the footsteps of Jesus throughout the whole of his career—who had been themselves appointed to announce the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven, and been furnished with the requisite instructions for their mission, and had afterwards shared all his various fortunes up to the very moment of his being betrayed into the hands of his enemies—if they, the selected depositaries of his doctrine, companions of his life, and spectators of his miracles, so understood him, what ground can there be for assuming that any other representation of his teaching is accurate ? We have, in truth, no right to suppose that the view taken by the friends

and followers of Jesus, immediately after his death, of the lessons he taught, and the conditions he prescribed for admission into the privileges of his kingdom, was erroneous. And if, in defiance of probability, we adopt that supposition, in order to save the doctrine of Jesus at the expense of the understanding or liberality of the Apostles, we can, obviously, have no security for the truth of the narrations in which those doctrines have been preserved, and which are presumed to be derived from the report of these very men.

The orthodox view requires us to suppose that Jesus taught the rejection of the Jews and the reception of the Gentiles; that he announced the utter unimportance of place—especially of the sacred sites of Jewish and Samaritan worship, Jerusalem and Gerizim, and, by implication, of their ritual also—to the true worship of Jehovah; that, in his final instructions to the Apostles, after his resurrection, he had told them to make disciples of all nations (=Gentiles), imposing no other ceremony of initiation than that of baptism; and, yet, that immediately after his ascension these lessons were forgotten or disregarded by those to whom they were addressed, and were only introduced into the Church by Stephen the Hellenist, and Saul the Cilician; the former of whom expiated the too daring innovation by his death, and the latter by the ceaseless persecution of which his own letters contain the touching and graphic description. And neither of these men had, so far as we know, ever seen Jesus in his lifetime; and the latter emphatically disclaims having derived his doctrine from the Apostles. And the last we hear of the brethren at Jerusalem in the New Testament is that James, as the head of this, the Mother Church, with the approval of his colleagues, recommends Paul to prove by some public act his recognition of the authority of the Jewish law, and his submission to its requirements; showing the unaltered convictions of what we may term the Apostolical College upon the subject. And, at this time, nearly thirty years had elapsed since the death of Jesus. It is difficult to accept this

view. Impossible, excepting upon the hypothesis of M. Renan that the Apostles were men of narrow intellect and low feelings, who could, we must suppose, remember, but could neither understand nor practise the lessons of their Master. But if we accept this hypothesis, and suppose that during this long period the teachings of Jesus were, practically, so ignored or forgotten that it required the material facts of the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the nation to recall them to memory, or to show their true bearing, it is at least probable that their reproduction was owing to the imagination rather than to the recollection of the narrators ; and it is even certain that their precise form was determined by the circumstances under which they were produced.

The unquestioned facts appear to be, on the one hand, that up to a short time before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Apostles who had known Jesus continued to regard the law as binding—Jerusalem as the holy city and the seat of the future Messianic Kingdom—the Jews as the inheritors of the promises—and the initiated Gentiles as only admitted to share in the anticipated privileges on condition of certain ceremonial observances or abstinences. And, on the other hand, that in the accounts we possess of the life of Jesus, he is represented as contradicting with abundant distinctness all of these views. We have, therefore, to enquire whether it is more probable that the belief of the Apostles was at variance with the plain teaching of their Master, or that the Gospels in which that teaching has been recorded have been modified to suit the event ; and the latter is surely the case. When we have to decide whether to draw an inference from the actual conduct of men at the time, or from anonymous narratives composed thirty or seventy or one hundred years after, and the earliest of which have been exposed to indefinite alterations, few, in ordinary cases, could hesitate for a moment in choosing the former. If the result is different in the present case, this is to be attributed, in part, to the circumstance that our views of the proceedings of the

Apostles are coloured by the impression we have received from the previous perusal of the four Gospels, and from the existing practice of the Church; and, in part, to the prevailing sentiment which would rather assume error and imperfection in the earlier views of the Apostles, than allow that there is any substantial inaccuracy in the report of the words of Jesus contained in the Gospels. Few, therefore, realise the fact that there is any discrepancy between the conduct of the Apostles and the commands of Jesus; and those who do, nearly all assume that it must have arisen from some mistake on the part of the Apostles.

In support of the last assumption it has been argued that it is impossible to understand from what source the ultimate views of the Church upon this subject were derived, or to what influence their triumph is to be attributed, if they had not been at first derived from Jesus, or at least fairly deducible from his teaching. It has been said, and with much apparent force, that, inasmuch as the Christian society was founded upon a belief in Jesus which had reference not merely to what he did but to what he taught, it would have been impossible to have secured a hearing for those views if they were in fact new, and not in accordance with the primitive tradition. This argument is entitled to careful consideration, but there are two circumstances that appear to deprive it of much of its force. The one, to which reference has been already made, is, that neither in the writings of Paul nor in the Acts of the Apostles do we find any reference to the words of Jesus as bearing upon the controversy. And the other is, that, in fact, the Jewish portion of the Church gradually became separated from the Gentile, chiefly, if not entirely, upon the ground that they considered the prevailing doctrines as innovations upon the primitive faith. The one fact shows that the enlarged views which finally prevailed might be supported upon grounds of general reason, and by arguments drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures, apart from any supposed direct teaching of Jesus; and the other that there was in reality a protest against these

views on the part of the representatives of the Church at Jerusalem, which resulted in their being in the end regarded as heretics. The prevalence of these doctrines among the Gentile churches, therefore, is in itself no proof that they were taught in the first instance by Jesus ; while their rejection by the Jewish brethren is scarcely consistent with the idea that they had formed part of the original apostolical tradition. And it is, at least, as easy to understand how expressions that he had never uttered should have been ascribed to Jesus for the purpose of accrediting innovations that could be no longer resisted, as it is to account for the omission in the earliest controversies of all reference to such expressions, or for the fact that, in the face of such expressions, recorded in the earliest Christian writings, any part of the Church should have persisted in a system of exclusion which their Master had so plainly condemned.

Still, it is said, the hostility of the Chief Priests and Pharisees is inexplicable upon the hypothesis that the teaching of Jesus was, in fact, such as we have represented. Without attempting, at present, to determine whether we can satisfactorily account for the persecution and death of Jesus, we may, at least, assert that the account in the Synoptical Gospels furnishes no support to the ordinary view. It is quite certain that those who are represented as suborning false witnesses against Jesus, and as unable to find any other ground of accusation than the alleged statement with regard to the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple, could not be supposed to be aware of anything said by him to the effect that the law was of only temporary obligation, and that the Jews were to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven. If Stephen was stoned upon such a charge, it would certainly have been sufficient to secure the condemnation of Jesus. And no false witnesses would, in that case, have been necessary. The accounts of the trial scene in all the Gospels, however, imply that Jesus had neither done nor taught anything that could be truly alleged as a ground for his condemna-

tion by the Sanhedrim. They, therefore, so far as any inference can be drawn from them, support the view of the teaching of Jesus, in this respect, that we have derived from the after conduct of the Apostles.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE GOSPEL OF THE INFANCY.

AT the very commencement of the Gospel narratives we are met by an almost insuperable difficulty. The first two chapters, both of the first and of the third Gospels, agree in representing Jesus as having been conceived by, if not naturally the son of, a yet unwedded mother, and as having been born at Bethlehem. In every other portion of their narrative, however, these chapters differ; if not to the extent of absolutely contradicting each other, still so far that it has taxed the utmost skill of harmonists to shew their possible agreement.¹ And certainly no one who reads the account in the first Gospel could suppose, that Joseph and Mary had come to Bethlehem from their distant home in Galilee in obedience to a Roman ordinance, or that angels had announced the miraculous birth to shepherds abiding in the field, who had proclaimed the news abroad, or that the child Jesus had been duly presented in the Temple, and there publicly recognized by two eminent persons

¹ Dean Alford, N. T. for English Readers, admits that the narratives, as they stand, are contradictory, but he, nevertheless, believes both. He is even severe upon the harmonists who attempt to frame schemes of reconciliation between the two, on account of the triumph they thus furnish to “the enemies of our faith;” a phrase which seems to include all that believe less than he does. The Dean, however, forgets that the faith which can believe two (apparently) contradictory propositions in matters of fact, is a very rare gift, and that, for one who is so endowed, there are thousands who can be satisfied with a plausible, though demonstrably, false explanation. To this latter class the despised harmonists render a real service.

as the Messiah, or that he had then returned with his parents to Nazareth, whence they came up in accordance with the requirements of the law at regular intervals to Jerusalem.

As little, too, would the reader of the third Gospel imagine that Magians from the East, who had seen the Star of the Messiah, and had come to worship him, threw the Court of Herod and the people of Jerusalem into trouble by their announcement—or that Herod, in the vain hope of slaying the infant King of the Jews, had slaughtered all the infants of Bethlehem—or that Joseph and Mary had fled to Egypt, carrying Jesus with them, and had only returned on being miraculously informed of the death of Herod—or that they returned with the purpose of settling in Judæa, from which they were dissuaded by the fear of Archelaus, who reigned in the place of his father—or that they only, at last, fixed upon Nazareth as their home, in obedience to another miraculous intimation. In the one picture, all is peace and hope—in the other, all is violence and terror. The proclamation to the Shepherds in the third Gospel, of glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill to men, forms a natural sequence to the annunciation by the angel to Mary, and the poetical effusions of the visit to Elizabeth; it harmonizes with the devout utterances of Simeon, and the announcement of the good news by Anna to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, with the peaceful return to their own city Nazareth, and their yearly visits to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. Contrast with this the doubt and distrust of Joseph on learning the pregnancy of his affianced bride—the trouble caused in Jerusalem by the announcement of the Magians that they had seen the Star of the King of the Jews—the enquiries of Herod of the Chief Priests and Scribes—the murder of all the young children at Bethlehem—the previous flight of Joseph and Mary with the child—their hesitating return, and the fear of Archelaus that drove them to Galilee, beyond the boundary of his dominion. In the latter picture there is only one ray to lighten the gloom of the narrative—

the homage offered to Jesus by those who, as Magians, represented the hostile powers of the unseen world; just as in the former, there is only one touch of sorrowful anticipation to chequer the brightness of the scene—the announcement to Mary that a sword should pierce through her own heart also.¹ The question, therefore, is not merely whether it is possible to find room in the one narrative for the events described in the other, but rather to understand how it could be possible, if all those events occurred that the two evangelists have separately described, that each should have confined himself so exclusively to those of one class, when the others must have been known to him; and how each should have framed his account in such a manner as to appear to exclude the incidents narrated by the other.

The approved method of harmonizing the two accounts is, at present, to insert the visit of the Magians between the presentation in the Temple and the return to Galilee, as related in the third Gospel. How far this is possible, without contradicting that account, will appear from a simple inspection. The third Gospel says (Luke ii. 23-39), "They took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord according as it is written in the law of the Lord"—"and when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord they returned into Galilee to their own city Nazareth." Can it be anything but a contradiction to this to say, "when they had performed all things in Jerusalem they returned to Bethlehem—remained there until the arrival of the Magians—received their gifts—then fled into Egypt, and afterwards were only prevented from settling in Judæa by fear of Archelaus, and returned to Galilee under supernatural guidance?" It is, no doubt, true, as the harmonists suggest, that the public presentation and the tranquil

¹ "It is instructive, as shewing the purely arbitrary character of modern orthodox criticism, to see the meaning attempted to be given to this phrase, not, it may be assumed, without a tacit reference to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, that 'the sharp pangs of sorrow for sin must pierce her own heart also.'”—Alford's N. T. for English Readers, *in loc.*

sojourn in Jerusalem, until all legal obligations had been discharged, could not have happened after the attention of Herod had been directed to Bethlehem by the arrival of the Magians. It is equally true, however, that while the facts of the case are inconsistent with this latter supposition, the plain language of the third Gospel is inconsistent with the former. And, further, if within five miles of Jerusalem, in the city of prophecy,—the destined birthplace of the Messiah,—such events had taken place as the heavenly vision of the Shepherds, and their public announcement of the fact ; and if in Jerusalem itself—in the Temple—Jesus had been publicly recognized by two persons as remarkable and as well known as Simeon and Anna presumably were, could there have been need of the enquiries of Herod, or that the Chief Priests should rest their censure solely upon the prophecy, without referring to its seeming actual fulfilment ?

In answer to these questions, it may, no doubt, be suggested that these reports of the shepherds, and the prophetic recognitions of Simeon and Anna, were unknown, or were disregarded by the King and the Chief Priests, who would not even have troubled themselves to enquire into the truth of such rumours had they reached them ; and, certainly, viewing their character in the light of history, this would be the case. Few men, probably, would have been less likely than were Herod and the Sadducees of Jerusalem to trouble themselves with the fancies of shepherds, or the broken utterances of two old people, whom they would regard as passing into their second childhood. But then, from this point of view, both Herod and the Chief Priests would have been equally unlikely to pay any attention to the statement of unknown foreigners,—that they had seen, in their own land, the Star of the King of the Jews, and had come to worship him. In truth, it is difficult to say which is more incredible—that Magians from the east should have come to Jerusalem to worship the King of the Jews, because they had seen his Star in their own country ; or that, upon their mere statement, Herod and the people of Jerusalem should have been

troubled, and the former have been led on to commit a gratuitous and wholesale murder, when the slightest enquiry would have enabled him to learn that the child whom the Magians had worshipped, and to whom they had presented their offerings, had been taken away by his father.

If, however, we are to assume that Herod and the people of Jerusalem were sufficiently credulous to attach importance to the statement of strangers from a distant land that they had seen a star, which, by their astrological art, they had discovered to be the Star of the King of the Jews, we have no right to suppose that they would be indifferent to rumours of angelic visions and prophetic utterances in the city of David, and in the Temple itself. The credit which, it is suggested, they gave to the one, warrants us in assuming that attention, at least, would be directed to the other ; and the correspondence in purport, and place, and time, between the inference drawn from the Eastern Star that a King of the Jews had been born, and the prophecy of Micah that he was to be born in Bethlehem on the one hand ; and the announcement of the angels, the corresponding birth in the stable at Bethlehem, and the recognition of the child so born by Simeon and Anna on the other,—must have induced all who were impressed by a belief in the former, to see its realization in the latter. It follows, then, that either the account in the first Gospel, or that in the third, must be incorrect, and, as, *à priori*, there is no reason for preferring one to the other, it is very possible that both may be so.

Some of the reasons for distrusting the account in the first Gospel have already been given. The narrative implies accurate knowledge on the part of the Magians, either the result of astrological calculations, or divinely revealed. Few at the present time will be disposed to admit that there was, in this instance, a true result from a false science ; and it is, at least, equally difficult to suppose a divine revelation so unmeaning, and involving such fatal results. In fact, the whole story is so arranged as to make the Magians the instruments of

arousing the jealousy of Herod, and thus of bringing about what the writer regards as a signal fulfilment of two prophecies—the weeping of Rachel over her children that were not, and the calling of the Son of God out of Egypt,—passages which, on inspection, have no relation whatever to the events with which they are connected. Had their guiding star led the Magians at once to Bethlehem, or had their calculations been carried to the point of merely determining the place of the birth, or had the dream that warned them not to return to Herod been sent before to warn them where the young child lay, the slain children would have been spared, and the safety of Jesus would not have been threatened. And although, in a natural series of events, it is generally idle to speculate upon what would have happened if this or that had, or had not, been done, yet, when we are told that events have been brought about by the intervention of a superior being, we have a right to enquire how far the preventible results agree with what, in human agents, we should call prudence, humanity, and justice. Where, then, in this case, was the prudence of exposing Jesus to a danger that could only be escaped by flight into a foreign land; and where the justice and humanity of causing the death of so many harmless children, and carrying terror and anguish into so many peaceful households, for no single apparent end; and when, by a trifling change, these results might have been averted?

And not only is the supernatural part of the story such as to contradict our conceptions of the character of God, but the conduct attributed to Herod is equally inconsistent and improbable. It may be conceded that he would have had little scruple in putting to death a score or two of children, if he had believed it necessary to his personal safety, or to the security of his dynasty. Nothing, however, that we know of his character justifies us in supposing that he could have attached so much importance to the statement of a few unknown foreigners, as to have slaughtered all the children of a village

on the chance of thus removing out of the way a possible competitor, with his son or grandson, for the throne of Judæa. And it is, perhaps, even more improbable, considering the promptitude and decision he displayed on all occasions, that, if he had believed in the truth of the announcement and feared the result, he should not have had the Magians watched by trusty emissaries, instructed at once to seize and slay the child. As, therefore, the account in the first Gospel is both inconsistent and improbable, as it contradicts directly that which is contained in the third, and as it receives no corroboration from any other quarter, there is no alternative but to reject it as unhistorical, and to attribute it to some vague or misunderstood tradition, which received its present shape under the impression that perils must have menaced the infancy of the Messiah, combined with a belief that all prophecies must have received their fulfilment in incidents connected with his life.

It remains, then, to examine the account given in the third Gospel. This distinctly asserts what might be doubtful from the first—that Jesus was not only conceived, but was born prior to the marriage of his mother;¹ that his birth occurred in Bethlehem, and that, subsequently, the family went to reside in Nazareth. The occasion for the presence of Joseph and Mary at Bethlehem is, however, furnished by an assumed decree of taxing, which required every Jew to repair to the town to which his family belonged, in order, presumably, that he might be enrolled with his tribe. It has been said upon this that there is no record of any such taxation in the days of Herod, and that such a decree would have been quite inconsistent with the position of that Prince; that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria till several years after the death of Herod; that the very object of enrolling would have been

¹ Mary is the espoused = betrothed wife of Joseph; not the wife simply. The word is the same as that used in the first Gospel, Matt. i., 16, when his mother, Mary, was *espoused* to Joseph, etc. That this was also the understanding of the early Church is shewn by the Gospel of St. Thomas.

defeated if those who were enrolled had been taken from the place of their residence, where their position and property were known, to a place where they had no personal connection, and where there would be no means of testing the accuracy of any statement they might make as to their possessions; and that there would be the further absurdity, that they were enrolled in one place and would have to pay in another. And, in the face of these difficulties, it is not easy to give credence to the statement of the evangelist. The mere negative evidence arising from the want of all contemporary notice of such a decree, would not, probably, of itself be entitled to much weight;¹ but the improbability that any such decree should be made while Herod was king, as it would have been inconsistent with the principles of Roman government, the obvious mistake as to the time at which Cyrenius was governor of Syria, tested even by the data supplied by the author himself as to the age of Jesus when he entered upon his ministry,² and the erroneous view taken by the writer, of the object and method of the enrolment, furnish conclusive grounds for believing that he is mistaken throughout; and that, having to reconcile the tradition that Jesus was born in Bethlehem with the tradition that Nazareth was the residence of Joseph and Mary, he believed that he had found the means of

¹ Excepting in the case of Josephus. An enrolment of the people, which compelled every Jew to resort to the place to which his family belonged, must have caused sufficient excitement to have secured a place in his history. He, however, like the author of the third Gospel and the Acts, knew of only one decree of "taxing"—that which provoked the insurrection of Judas of Galilee.

² Jesus would have been much less than thirty years old at the time. A suggestion has recently been made that the name of a governor of Syria wanting on the Eubogine tablet was that of Cyrenius, or Quinius, and that, consequently, he was twice governor of Syria. If this could be admitted it would remove one source of objection, but would leave the other untouched, and might account for the mistake of the writer, who had connected with the first government of Cyrenius an incident that really occurred in the second. That the taxing referred to was really that made after the death of Archelaus, for the purposes of revenue, is conclusively shewn by the speech attributed to Gamaliel (Acts v. 37) by the same author, where the "taxing," or enrolment, is referred to and connected with the revolt of Judas of Galilee. Obviously, the writer knew of only one such decree, and that was when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, several years after the assumed date of the birth of Jesus.

doing this in the well-remembered first taxing by the Romans ; without considering minutely—probably without being aware of—the chronological and other difficulties involved. We need not pursue this enquiry into the supernatural portion of the statement. A story told by one writer only, of events that had happened, at the very least, more than half a century before, that relates two apparitions of the angel Gabriel—the miraculous infliction of deafness and dumbness and their equally miraculous cure ; the appearance of angels in the sky to shepherds, who hear the very words they sing,—and that professes to record, verbatim, the extempore poetical effusions of a youthful maiden and an aged priest, but that has no hold upon contemporary events, and no connection with the subsequent story, can be entitled to no credit as a history. If believed at all, it must be upon other grounds.

It may be said that, granting our inability to admit as true the accounts of the evangelists as to the incidents connected with the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, or the causes that led his supposed parents to be present there at the time, yet the very circumstance of those two narratives having been framed to account for the event, shews, at least, the uniformity and persistency of the tradition. And this is, no doubt, true. It is impossible to read the story, as told in the first and third Gospels, without seeing that the one is framed, among other things, to account for the circumstance that, having been resident at Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary should afterwards have gone to reside in Nazareth ; and the other for the circumstance that, having been settled at Nazareth, they should, nevertheless, have been dwelling in Bethlehem at the time of that birth. They may, consequently, be accepted as evidence, that at the time they were composed it was a fixed belief among Christians that Jesus had been born at Bethlehem. But, then, the discrepancy in the two accounts, and the fact that both are obviously unhistorical, shew that, though this belief existed, it had no certain basis ;

and suggest that its reasons were dogmatical rather than historical; rather a conviction that such must have been the case, than evidence that it was. And when, upon a perusal of the other Gospels, and even of the later chapters of these two, we find that there is no hint of any knowledge of the alleged fact on the part of Jesus, or of his disciples, or of his enemies; that many occasions arise when it would have been pertinent to assert it, because it would have formed a ready answer to objections, but that no such assertion is made; and when, too, we remember how strong were the inducements for those who recognized in Jesus the promised Messiah, to assume that in him were fulfilled all prophecies, it is difficult not to conclude that his birth in the predicted city formed no part of the earliest tradition, and that we have here, not the distorted representation of an actual occurrence, but the product of the prevailing sentiment of the judaizing portion of the early Church.

In this respect it is important to compare the first and third Gospels with the second and fourth, neither of which contains any reference to the birth at Bethlehem, and the latter of which, by implication, expressly excludes it;¹ though it is probable that the omission has to be accounted for on different grounds. In the second Gospel, so far, at least, as this portion of the history is concerned, we see the earliest form of Christian tradition (as, in fact, we see in the first, if the first two chapters are excluded), when Jesus was believed to be the Messiah, in spite of his Galilean birth. In the fourth we find the results of a later stage of thought, when the Messiahship of Jesus was represented as the result of his inherent dignity, and needed no corroboration from his fulfilling the conditions of prophecy as regarded the King of the Jews. It may almost be regarded as certain that the writer of the fourth Gospel was acquainted with the narrative of the birth at Bethlehem, in both of its forms. His omission to embody either in his

¹ John i., 45, 46.

work arose, probably, in part, from the different aspect under which he purposed to himself to represent Jesus, and, in part, from his anti-judaical tendencies. The former rendered it needless that Jesus should fulfil this assumed condition of Messiahship, and the latter forbade him to reproduce that portion of the existing tradition which exhibited Jesus in the character of the purely Jewish deliverer, predicted by Micah.

With the writer of the second Gospel, however, the case is different. No reason can be assigned for his entire omission of the narrative of the first, had he been acquainted with it, though, in that case, it would, probably, have been altered in many particulars. For the miraculous conception of Jesus, and the marvels attending his birth, belonged to a class of ideas with which the Gentiles were familiar, and were well adapted to elevate their idea of the nature of the person of whom they were told; and the author, who dwells upon the marvels wrought by Jesus, in preference to his teaching, would, we may be sure, have seized this opportunity of adding to his store of wonders if he had known of it. If, then, we still retain the opinion that the second Gospel is founded upon the first, it can only be upon the assumption that these chapters were interpolated in the first Gospel after the second was written—an assumption supported by the obvious fact that there is no allusion, of any kind, to their contents in any of the subsequent chapters. It is, indeed, probable that they were interpolated after the composition of the third Gospel. One of the features of that Gospel is the skill which the writer displays in interweaving his original matter with that which he derives from the two earlier narratives; and though, in many instances, he modifies, and in some, entirely omits incidents related in the first Gospel, yet he never absolutely excludes them, excepting in the present instance. And no reason has ever been assigned, so far as we are aware, for his peremptory exclusion of the visit of the Magians and the flight into Egypt, upon the supposition that he was acquainted

with the story, as a part of the narrative from which his own was, in so great a degree, derived. If he had known it as an unauthenticated statement, whether still floating in tradition, or already embodied in some writing to which he attached no authority, the texture of his own history, which, between the birth of Jesus and the return of Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, allows of no insertion of such events, is intelligible; but scarcely so if he had met with it in the first Gospel, whose authority he so unmistakably recognizes. This, however, is a matter which it is not necessary or important to decide. It is enough that we are entitled to conclude that the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, and the wonderful events with which it was associated, formed no part of the original, and, so to speak, common tradition of the Church.

But, then, it is equally certain that this original tradition represented Jesus as the son of Joseph, and Mary as the mother of several children, all, as well as Jesus, begotten and born in wedlock. With the habits of the Jews at that time, it was impossible that the fact of the eldest son having been born prior to the marriage of his mother, could have been unknown. And we may be sure that, if known, it would have been derogatory to him in the estimation of those who had never heard of the miraculous conception, or who did not believe it, and a source of glory in the minds of those who had so heard and believed. And it is impossible but that a truthful history of his life should have contained some manifestation of these feelings on the part of those who were brought into contact with him—the scorn of the one class, the adoration of the other. By the Mosaic law, a person born out of wedlock was excluded from the congregation; and it cannot be believed that, if this blot had attached to the birth of Jesus, he could, among those who knew the circumstances of his family, and who did not believe in him as the Messiah, have officiated as reader in the Synagogue, or have been permitted to assume the office of expounder of the law. Nor could his mother have retained her position as a

Jewish matron, or been referred to in the same terms that would be employed of any woman to whose character no stain attached, if apparently proved to have been unchaste by the birth of a child before marriage.

We have been so accustomed to the idea of the miraculous conception, and the associations with which it is connected in our minds are so exclusively those of purity and elevation, that it requires a strong effort of the imagination to place ourselves in the position of a pious Jew of the time of Jesus, and to realize the feelings of horror and indignation with which he would receive such a suggestion as that Jehovah should have been directly and literally the father of a human child. Not that his feeling is to be to us the measure of truth or of purity, but that our realization of it enables us to understand in what light Mary would have been regarded if, in fact, she had been known to have borne a child before marriage, and if an attempt had been made to account for the circumstance by a suggestion that the child was conceived of the Spirit of God. She would have been regarded by the majority as not merely unchaste, but as a blasphemer. And if a few had believed her story,—as there is nothing that some persons cannot be found to believe,—they would have been altogether unable to stem the torrent of indignation directed against her. But of any such feeling on the one side or the other there is not even a trace. Everything that we read suggests an ordinary Jewish household—chaste, pious, orderly, and peaceful—supported by the labour of the father until the children grew up to contribute their share to its maintenance; and then, if we may credit an indication in the second Gospel, Jesus must have himself wrought at his father's trade. Certainly nothing in the Synoptical Gospels would lead to the inference that there was anything in the circumstances of his birth, or of his youth or early manhood, to prepare his brethren or fellow-townspeople for his subsequent assumption of the character in which he appeared.¹

¹ The question of the miraculous conception has been considered only under one

With regard to the alleged descent of Jesus from David the case is very similar. This was at an earlier period a portion of the Christian tradition, as is shewn by the statement of Paul referred to above, and by the fact that the two genealogies preserved to us both trace his descent through Joseph, which became unmeaning, and in fact a puzzle, when the idea of the miraculous conception was introduced. Whether either of these genealogies is accurate we are unable to ascertain, for there are no possible means of verification open to us. There is, however, a strong presumption that neither is so, from the circumstance that two so conflicting should have been preserved. If existing records in the family of Joseph had furnished the materials from which a genealogy of Jesus was drawn up, we may be quite certain that whatever obscurity might attach to the earlier portions, they would not have described Joseph as possessing two fathers, without having, at the same time, furnished the ex-

aspect, viz., whether it was known to the contemporaries of Jesus, or formed part of the belief of the first disciples. Regarded as a question of fact, it is, of course, utterly incredible, and as entirely incapable of being proved by evidence as the corresponding dogma of the immaculate conception. There is one intelligible ground upon which it may be rested—the Divine inspiration of the two Evangelists who relate it, or, as the case may be, of the Church that receives their testimony. But this, though an intelligible, is scarcely a secure basis for the belief; for, whatever the possession of Divine inspiration may imply, it would certainly seem that it does not imply an absolute guarantee against error in matter of fact. Upon any other basis no reasonable man could believe it.

Many semi-rationalistic commentators, among whom we must here include Dean Alford, suggest that Luke, while collecting materials for his Gospel, might have received the account from Mary; forgetting, apparently, that the story would not be a whit more credible on that account. And, yet, any one who will imagine himself to be told such a tale by a lady of upwards of seventy, as having occurred to herself more than half a century before, will see that such is the case. But, in truth, there is nothing to lead to such a supposition, and much to contradict it. The only notice of Mary after the resurrection shows that there was no tradition of her having been permanently connected with the Church. And if Luke had obtained these particulars from her, how is it that this is all he learned, and that during the whole public life of Jesus there is no reference to her in his Gospel, excepting the disparaging assertion that those who do the will of God are his mother and his brothers. Neither during the journey to Jerusalem, nor at the cross, nor at the sepulchre, nor at the ascension, is her name once mentioned. And besides this, the suggestion that the story rests upon the evidence of Mary destroys at once (with Protestants) its assumed supernatural guarantee.

planation of so unusual an occurrence. It is impossible that both can be accurate, for they palpably contradict each other. All the attempts that have been made to reconcile them proceed upon the assumption of some error, or omission, in one account or the other, and the presumption is that they are both equally erroneous and unfounded. They were, probably, invented to supply to believing Jews, and to those who entered the Church by the way of Judaism,—to all, in fact, who considered that the descent from David was an essential pre-requisite to the Messiahship claimed for Jesus,—a proof that this condition was fulfilled.

In this particular also the first chapters of the first and third Gospels are inconsistent with the whole of the subsequent history, for there is no reference in the latter, on the part either of Jesus or of his disciples, to the fact of his Davidical descent; and there is much to suggest the opposite conclusion. If it had been known that he was, in fact, descended from David,—and, with the Jewish habits of that day, such a fact could scarcely have been unknown,—this would surely have lessened, in some degree, the astonishment of those who, on witnessing his assumption of the prophetical character, referred, almost contemptuously, to his father, the carpenter, and to his brethren whom they knew. The fact that these were “of the house and lineage of David”¹ must have given some lustre to them, and have justified the belief that from such a source an inspired teacher might arise. And, as has been often pointed out, the dialogue with the Pharisees, in which Jesus argues that the Messiah could not be the Son of David, because David addresses him as Lord, evinces in the most conclusive manner the opinion of the narrator, that Jesus himself had not this mark of Messiahship.

¹ Some commentators suggest that, in the confusion of the times, the proof of this was lost or obscured, or that the family of Joseph, in its actual condition, refrained from making the claim. But they forget that, according to the third evangelist, it was so notorious as to occasion his being summoned from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be taxed in the city of David.

We are compelled, consequently, to presume that Jesus was of obscure and unknown ancestry, and that, like so many of the heroes of our race, he rendered illustrious a name that had no previous title to renown. It is probable that the belief in the descent from David, like that of the birth at Bethlehem, was the result of the conviction of the disciples, that, as the Messiah, he must have fulfilled all the conditions of prophecy. In this case, also, there appears reason to surmise that the existing genealogy did not form part of the first Gospel when the third was composed, for it is scarcely conceivable that the writer of the latter would, if it had, have introduced into his work so palpable a contradiction of that of his predecessor.¹

Of all that is related of Jesus before his baptism there remains, consequently, only the incident of the interview with the doctors in the Temple, reported in the third Gospel alone. It is not needful to examine into the authority for this. Possibly it really occurred; but when an event of this nature, belonging to a period of which no other evangelist speaks, and with regard to which we know, from other sources, many legends were current, is preserved by one writer only, it is much more probable that it is due to the embellishing influence of tradition than that it represents any actual scene.

The result at which we have arrived, upon purely critical grounds, and apart from any objection founded upon the alleged supernatural character of the events, is, that the first two chapters of the first Gospel are entirely unhistorical, and that the same is the case with the first two chapters of the third, with the possible exception of the story last referred to. And yet there can be no doubt that the incidents related in these—“the virgin mother and the heavenly child;” the adoration of the Magi; the angelic appearance to the shepherds; the

¹ It is observable that Justin, writing about the middle of the second century, appears to know nothing of the descent of Joseph from David, but traces that of Jesus through Mary (Reuss, Hist. du Canon, p. 57). This suggests a doubt whether his authorities contained these genealogies.

birth in the stable and the cradling in the manger,—the pictures of original purity and of happy maternity; of intrinsic dignity shining through its mean environment, and henceforth ennobling poverty as the chosen condition of the Son of God and the Redeemer of man,—have been potent instruments for facilitating the spread of Christianity, and are even now main sources of its power in the greater portion of Christendom. In fact, at the present day, throughout the Greek and Roman churches, Christianity rests more upon faith in the Virgin than upon faith in Jesus; and the worship of Jesus is rather in the form of the infant—the bambino—than in that of the teacher and prophet set forth in the Synoptical Gospels; or the Son of God, born of a woman, born under the law, by whom God made the worlds,—crucified for our redemption and raised for our justification, preached by Paul; or the pre-existing Logos, by whom all things were made, of the fourth Gospel. And the emotional side of Christianity has always a tendency to ally itself with these images; or if prevented, as it is to a great extent in Protestantism, then to bring into prominence the human aspect of Jesus. In that case it finds an object for its devotion in the man that went about doing good; who took little children in his arms and blessed them; who wept over the anticipated woes of his countrymen, and who loved his own to the end with a human love;—rather than in the consubstantial son of the creeds.

This is, perhaps, inevitable. Our wider knowledge of our own world and of the universe have so changed our conceptions of God, that to one who realises the change, the old feelings of devotion that a Jew could entertain towards Jehovah are now scarcely possible. The infinite being, filling a literally infinite universe, governing, not merely all races of men that dwell upon the face of the earth, but all races of sentient and intelligent beings in all worlds and systems of worlds, present and operating in all places and all times, carrying on infinite processes by laws which never vary, towards results that we can neither foresee nor even

imagine, is too vast and impersonal a conception to be apprehended by individual faith.¹ It requires to be humanized and limited. This is effected for Protestants in the person of the Man Jesus, and for Romanists in the Virgin and Child. And the process is facilitated to the former by the pictures which these Gospels of the infancy furnish of the human relations sustained by Jesus.

Nor must it be forgotten, in justice to the Roman Church, that, just as the Nicene Creed, so far as the Son is concerned, is the logical development of the introduction to the fourth Gospel, and the Athanasian Creed the complement of the Nicene,—so the doctrine of the Theotokos—the Mother of God—is the logical development of the story of the miraculous conception, and the recent dogma of the immaculate conception the complement of that doctrine from the point of view of those creeds. For, surely, if the Prince of Wisdom was deemed too sacred to be born from any womb but that of a Virgin,² the coequal and consubstantial Son, one with the Father in person and dignity, should require for the medium of his birth into our world a being free from all stain of passion and infirmity—as pure as the human nature which he himself assumed.

And this indicates the weak point of these narratives. Side by side with the good they have done,—and few will deny that they have done much;—they have also tended on the one hand to lower the conception of God, and to substitute a human for a divine object of worship, and on the other to elevate the ideal of virginity with all its ascetic and prurient associations above that of maternity. Those who are brought to see God in Man can scarcely refrain from making the human aspect of this God the object of worship. And those who look upon the Virgin as the Mother of God, necessarily feel, whatever they may suppose

¹ This is instinctively shewn by a work published some seven or eight years ago, “An Essay on the Plurality of Worlds,” the object of which really was to bring God more nearly within the reach of man, by shewing that he had nothing but one world to care for.

² Jerome adv. Jovin. i. 26, cited in Baden Powell’s “Order of Nature.”

themselves to believe, that God is derived and limited, having a beginning in time, and continuing to sustain a subordinate and dependant relation to his mother. So that a devout Romanist can write of "insults offered to the majesty of God and to his mother," without a word to guard against the seeming inference from his language, as though, in fact, it were the case of an ordinary parent and child. It needs no testimony to tell us, what, nevertheless, all testimony confirms, that when such is the language of instructed devotees, the whole popular sentiment of devotion will be attracted towards the Virgin as the real source of blessing, and even of goodness, and that all true and worthy ideas of God will be effaced from the actual belief of the people. Little avails it that the original formularies of the Church remain unchanged, that in creeds and symbols the supremacy of the Father and his eternal existence may be asserted, and the origin of the Virgin in time and place distinctly set forth. These, indeed, may serve for arguments with heretics and infidels, or may mask from men of the higher order of intellect the true character of the system they sanction. With the people, however, they have no influence. The very phrase, "The Mother of God," of itself practically outweighs all their teaching, if ever they are taught, and gives to Mary in the new Roman belief the same supremacy that belonged to Cybele, "The mother of the gods," in the old.

In justice to the early disciples it must not be forgotten that in this, as in so many other cases, the Church has contradicted the plain teaching of Jesus as preserved in their traditions. Even in the fourth Gospel he is described as repudiating in express terms all equality with the Father ; while in the Synoptical Gospels there is nothing to suggest the possession of a divine nature, and he even repels the ascription of absolute goodness. And with regard to Mary, he emphatically disclaims all subordination to her, and, instead of investing her with any exceptional dignity, he elevates every one of his true disciples to at least an equality of relationship to himself. He even,

by implication, condemns the very employment of that term "blessed," which Anglicans as well as Romanists, and some, too, of the dissidents of England and America, always associate with her name. When, in his presence, a woman, who realized the pride and joy she would feel in being the mother of such a son, pronounced his mother blessed, Jesus, on the contrary, pronounces those rather to be entitled to such an epithet who hear the Word of God and do it. And when informed of the presence of his mother, under circumstances that might seem to imply some claim to authority on her part, he even disavows the natural ties that connect him with her, in order to give greater prominence to the spiritual ties that connect him with those who do the will of his Father. What "insults" to the "Mother of God" such language would imply if used by modern Protestant divines!

And, on the other hand, the assumed birth of Jesus from a virgin may easily be construed to imply that there is something impure and degrading in the marriage relation, and thus to give a colour to the Romish doctrine upon that subject. The ideal of that Church is not Christian, but Gnostic. It is not the "Angel in the house," but the saint in the cloister—not the wife and mother who is a crown of glory to her husband, and whose children rise up and call her blessed, but the "Regular" who has severed or renounced all earthly ties, in order that she may secure a higher place in heaven. Their type of womanly excellence is not the matron whose life is occupied in the discharge of duties, often perhaps individually trifling, but important, essential even in the aggregate, and endeared and dignified by love—the adviser, confidant, and friend of her children, training them in habits of devotion and piety, weeping over their wanderings, but never losing her faith in their ultimate amendment, and ready at all times to suffer in order that those whom she loves may be saved. It is rather the ascetic man, "pale," absorbed, emaciated—whose life is one long suicide—whose knces are callous with repeated genu-

flexions, and whose body is attenuated by fasting, and possibly torn by the scourge—who dares not perform the ablutions needful for cleanliness and health lest proud and impure thoughts should be suggested by the process—whose time is so occupied by self-inspection as to leave no leisure for acts of benevolence, and whose heart is filled with love of the Virgin or of Jesus to the exclusion of all human sympathies.

That which the Romish Church honours, and desires especially to promote is not chastity, but “holy virginity.” It is not the idealization of maiden purity, of youthful continence, of an habitual mastery over the passions, which shall make them the servants instead of the tyrants of the soul. It is the canonization, almost, we might say, the deification,¹ of a mere physical virtue which shuts out the votary from the most tender and unselfish circle of human feelings, which, save in exceptional times, or in peculiar constitutions, almost necessitates exclusion from society as a condition of its preservation, and brings with it material, mental, and moral results, upon which it would be painful to dwell.

Here, also, there has been a departure from the principles taught by Jesus. He, indeed, denounces unchastity, even of the heart. But he proclaims the divine origin of marriage. And there is not a word attributed to him to shew that he regarded virginity as holy, or even with favour. Romanists, however, may plead apostolical authority in support of some of their views, since Paul undoubtedly represents the married state, not perhaps as impure, but as keeping the wedded brother and sister upon a lower level than that which it was both possible and desirable they should reach. And it may be a question whether his views with regard to the essentially sinful nature of the flesh did not even induce him to regard marriage as something

¹ There is not so much difference between these. No old Roman ever prayed to the “Divus Julius” with half the faith and fervour with which a modern Roman supplicates “the holy Anthony,” though the former was called a god, and the latter only a saint.

evil in itself, and only permitted in order to prevent the still greater evils resulting from the disorderly gratification of the passions. To pursue these inquiries would lead us too far from our immediate purpose.¹

¹ According to the traditions of the Church preserved by Eusebius, Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, was not only married, but was accompanied to his See by his wife, who suffered martyrdom a short time before himself. It is rather unjust, though perhaps quite natural, that she should not have been canonized.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRECURSOR.

IN each of the Gospels Jesus is represented, before he entered upon his public ministry, as having been brought into contact with John the Baptist,—a person whose position, character, and relation to Jesus, present an enigma which it is scarcely possible to solve. Our only sources of information respecting him are the Gospels and Josephus, and a brief reference to his disciples in the Acts of the Apostles; and these do not enable us to answer the questions they suggest.

The picture drawn of John, by the first two evangelists, is that of an ascetic, in raiment, in food, and in residence. He dwells in the desert, eats locusts and wild honey, and is clothed with a garment of camel's hair, fastened about his loins with a leathern girdle. His dress and abode appear to be modelled upon those of Elijah, who also dwelt in the desert, and was, apparently, clothed in a single mantle of hair, and girded with a leathern belt; and though the food is not, as in his case, furnished miraculously, yet it is the natural product of the region, needing neither culture nor preparation. We are unable to say to what extent the picture thus drawn may have been affected by dogmatic considerations; for the desire to exhibit in John a copy of the predicted forerunner, may have led the writers to portray him in this guise. It is, however, quite possible that John, who appears to have attributed to himself the functions of Elijah, in his character of the messenger who was to precede the coming of the day of the Lord, may have felt that it was incumbent upon him to copy his exemplar as

nearly as circumstances would allow. We see, by the instances of the public entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, that such a scenic embodiment of the external incidents of a character would have been in accordance with the sentiments of the people, and John may have deemed it to be required by his position, or may have been willing to avail himself of the additional influence it might confer upon him.

That John was really an ascetic may be inferred from the speech of Jesus, in which he contrasts his own mode of life with that of his predecessor. And it appears, from the enquiry put into the mouth of his disciples as to the reason for the omission of the followers of Jesus to fast, that, if he did not impose fasting as a duty, he did not interfere with the habitual fastings which orthodox Jews were accustomed to practice. There is nothing of asceticism in his doctrines, according to any of our authorities. In the second and third Gospels he is represented as preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and in the third he is described, in addition, as laying down practical rules for the guidance of those that seek his advice. According to Josephus, he commanded the people to practice justice to each other, and piety to God. Only in the first Gospel, indeed, have we a description of what appears to have been the real character of his preaching—repentance, in view of the immediate coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. We can see from the two other Gospels, that this coming of the Kingdom must, at least, have been implied in his discourses, since the one whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose, and who was to come after him, could only be the Messiah. His disclaimer shews that Messianic expectations were associated with his preaching, and that these had led some among the multitude, or his disciples, to conjecture that he might himself be the Christ; and, though he repudiates that character, he does not discourage the hope of the immediate coming of the kingdom, but connects it with one whose claims are, as yet, undisclosed. And this conclusion

is confirmed by the speech attributed to Paul, in the Acts, that John baptized, telling his disciples that they must believe in the Christ that was to come after him; whom Paul identified with Jesus.¹

It was in view of this kingdom, and as a means, apparently, of admission to its privileges, that John preached repentance, and that he prescribed the rite of baptism for the remission of sins. We may, consequently, gather that he regarded it, primarily, rather under its moral than its material aspect. Possibly he believed that its coming might be accelerated by the amendment of the people, and postponed, perhaps indefinitely, by their continuance in sin. The prolonged delay of the appearance of the Messiah must have suggested a doubt in the mind of many a pious Jew, whether the true obstacle might not be in the condition of the nation itself. The prophets, upon whose predictions the belief rested, had insisted upon the necessity of mercy and truth; of justice to man and holiness to God. And there were many passages in their writings declaring that the promises of Jehovah were conditional, and would not be accomplished unless all the conditions were fulfilled.² And such, probably, was the doctrine preached by John. We cannot, indeed, determine whether the repentance he required was regarded as a national or an individual qualification; whether it was intended to fit the disciple to enter into the kingdom, or to prepare the way for its establishment. Probably the two ideas were not clearly distinguished. Both would be involved in his preaching, and one or the other dwelt upon according to the point of view from which the doctrine was, for the time, regarded.

There can be little doubt, however, that in practice the idea of individual qualification would ultimately become predominant. The rite of baptism that John prescribed, which in his system

¹ Acts xix., 4. This appears to be the true meaning of the language used by Paul.

² The book of Daniel must be excepted from this. It is apocalyptic rather than prophetic, and it fixes a definite time for the fulfilment of its predictions, irrespective of any moral preparation on the part of the people.

was apparently both a symbol and an instrument of the purification that must precede the remission of sins, was a personal act, and its consequences must have been personal also. Before the rite was administered, the neophyte was required to confess his sins, to promise repentance and amendment, and to profess a belief in the coming of the Messiah, into whose name he would seem to have been baptized.¹ When this was done, his sins were held to have been washed away in the cleansing waters, and with them all that obstructed his entrance into the kingdom of heaven, of which from that moment he became a citizen. And this would seem to imply that no one who was not thus baptized would be regarded as entitled to enter.

The rite of baptism had not merely a meaning and operation in view of the coming kingdom; it was also a ceremony of initiation. We can see from the notices in the Gospels that the disciples of John were a recognized body. And it would appear that they were numerous and influential throughout Galilee and Judea, and even in Jerusalem itself. We learn, too, from the Acts of the Apostles, that they had spread into Asia Minor, and, probably, even into Egypt.² We may infer, therefore, that John was engaged in forming a society, which was probably secret, in so far that its members would only be fully known to each other, and that none but members would be allowed to be present at its meetings. Its object can only be conjectured. Possibly they were confined to the moral reformation of the members, and to the increase of the society. Even in that case, however, they would necessarily tend to become allied with political feelings and movements, and it is not improbable that they had from the first a well understood political reference. In fact, in the actual state of the Jewish people, it could scarcely have been otherwise. We cannot even conjecture the signs by which the disciples were enabled to recognize

¹ The formula was probably, "into the name of him that should come," *eis το ονόμα του ερχομένου.*

² Acts xix. 1-7; xviii. 24.

each other, or the rites that they practised in common, though there must have been both. Whatever was its nature, however, any Jew might become a member. And we may be quite certain that none but Jews were admitted, and that after admission they were required to obey every precept of the law.¹

From the continuance of this society, and its wide diffusion, it is probable that it had been fully organized by its founder, and that, even from the beginning, provision had been made for the admission of fresh members by their being baptized either at meetings of the body, or by individuals authorized for the purpose. And whoever became a member considered himself as entitled on that account to admission into the kingdom, without recognizing its actual founder. The disciples at Ephesus, with whom Paul spoke, and who were baptized into the baptism of John, regarded themselves as brethren; and their claim had been recognized by others. Apollos, also, though instructed in the way of the Lord, knew only the baptism of John. It is true we are told that this knowledge and baptism were not considered sufficient. The disciples at Ephesus were, it is said, required to be baptized specifically into the name of the Lord Jesus; and Apollos, though it does not appear that he was re-baptized,² had the way of God more fully expounded to him. Merely narrow boundaries, we may believe, separated the followers of Jesus from those of John; and the latter not only expected the Messiah, but believed that they were qualified both to preach and to share his kingdom.

Two of the Evangelists³ describe John as having, in unmeasured terms, denounced those who came to his baptism; either the whole multitude, according to the third Evangelist, or the

¹ This results necessarily from the popularity of John among the Jews, and the influence of his disciples in Jerusalem. Matt. xxi. 16, and the corresponding passages in Mark and Luke.

² This, perhaps, may entitle us to doubt whether Paul, who rather disparages the importance of baptism, 1 Cor. i. 17, really required that the disciples at Ephesus should be re-baptized.

³ Matt. iii. 7, *et seq.*; Luke iii. 7, *et seq.*

Pharisees and Sadducees, according to the first: designating them as a generation of vipers, and indicating clearly their final rejection from the kingdom that he preached. It is plain from the close correspondence, it may almost be said the absolute identity, of the two Gospels, in what they have in common on this subject, that one has been copied from the other; either the passage in the third from that of the first with additions, or that in the first from that in the third with omissions,—in which case the latter must be an interpolation. And a comparison of the two passages suggests that this is, probably, true. The conclusion of the speech of the Baptist, common to both Gospels, in which he contrasts his own baptism with that of him who was to come, follows naturally, in the third Evangelist, the statement of the uncertainty in the minds of his hearers whether he might not himself be the Christ; and it is explained by his desire to disclaim all pretensions to that dignity, and to place himself in his avowed position of the forerunner; while in the first it has no relation to anything that has gone before. It is therefore more probable that the fuller version in the third Gospel was the original, and that it was partially transferred by some copyist into the first.¹

Apart, too, from any grounds of objection to the statement in the first Gospel, derived from a comparison with that in the third, there is nothing in the history to lead to the supposition that either the Pharisees or the Sadducees would have enrolled themselves among the disciples of John, or have presented themselves as candidates for his baptism. The latter, as we have seen, were the avowed opponents of the Messianic doctrine, on the double ground of its keeping alive an insurrectionary spirit in the people, and of its implying a belief in the resurrection of the dead. And the rite of baptism, upon which John insisted, was not required by the law, and would, consequently, have appeared to them a heterodox innovation. The former were equally the opponents of the practices and doctrines of

¹ D'Eichthal les Evangiles, Vol. ii. p. 205.

the Essenes, with whom it has been surmised that John was at one time connected. Nor would they have admitted that they needed confession and baptism for the remission of their sins. And, in addition to this, the passage in the third Gospel (Luke vii., 30)—“The Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized of him” (John)—contains a formal contradiction of the statement in the first Gospel, so far as the Pharisees are concerned.

There is, however, great difficulty in accepting the statement in the third Gospel as authentic. We see, in all the Synoptical Gospels, how strong was the feeling of the people in favour of John within a few months of his death, and we may gather from Josephus that his memory continued to be cherished for more than two generations afterwards. It is, at least, doubtful whether such feelings could have become associated with the man who, preaching the kingdom to Jews, had mocked at their pretensions, and had menaced them with absolute and final exclusion. Nor was there anything in his or their circumstances to explain such denunciations. They were attracted by his teaching, and evinced their belief in its truth by complying with its conditions. Their conduct was, consequently, a proof that they were entitled to share in the kingdom. And, from all that we know of John, no one would have been more ready than he to recognize the sufficiency of that proof, or the validity of their original claim, as children of Abraham.¹

We have no information whatever of the previous history of John. Even if we were not compelled to reject, as mythical, the account of his birth in the third Gospel, that would afford no materials from which we could understand his training or development, or the circumstances that led him to assume the office of a preacher of the kingdom. It has been suggested that he was, originally, an Esselian. If so, he must have

¹ The speech, however, corresponds with the stand-point of the author of the third Gospel : for, when he wrote, the majority of the Jews had been, practically, excluded from the Kingdom preached in the name of Jesus, and their place was supplied by Gentiles, whom God had raised up to be children to Abraham.

separated himself from that sect. A belief in the Messiah did not, so far as we can ascertain, form any part of their creed; and John, when first introduced, is represented as having a distinct position, and a discipleship dependent upon himself alone. The assumed connection with the Essenes may, after all, be purely imaginary. It is founded only upon the residence in the desert, in which they also resided, upon his ascetic mode of life, and upon the circumstance that he enforced the rite of baptism. But his asceticism may have been the result of a conscious imitation of Elijah, while baptism was a recognized Jewish ceremony of initiation, to which Gentile converts were required to submit, in addition to circumcision. It is very possible that his preaching was one of the indirect results of the revolt of Judas of Galilee, which, according to Josephus (*Antiq. xviii. I., 1*), though suppressed, left a spirit of resistance to foreign rule that was never altogether quiescent, and occasioned the final outbreak. This spirit was, necessarily, connected with Messianic aspirations and hopes, in which, from the nature of his teaching, John must have shared. In that case we may presume that experience of the weakness of the Jews had convinced him that success could only be obtained through help of Jehovah, and that he believed a moral reformation of the people was the condition of such help, or the condition of entrance into the Kingdom which Jehovah was about to establish.

The success of his preaching, drawing crowds together, was the cause, according to Josephus, of his imprisonment and death. This account is more probable in itself, and more consistent with the character of Herod, than that given in the first two Gospels, in which the imprisonment of John is attributed to a mere personal grievance, and his death to the malice of Herodias, acting through the fascinations of her daughter upon the weakness of Herod. It is, no doubt, possible that the two motives may have co-existed; or even that revenge for John's censure of his unlawful marriage may

have been Herod's real motive, and the alleged fear of insurrectionary movements only the pretext. The doctrines that John taught,—revolutionary doctrines as they would be termed in modern phraseology,—and the fact that he was, apparently, organizing a secret society, in which any one might be enrolled upon submitting to certain ceremonies, would be amply sufficient to excite the suspicions of Herod, and to prompt the measures which he adopted. To us, the Kingdom of Heaven means, either the Kingdom of God in heaven, or his spiritual kingdom upon earth, in the hearts of the faithful ; and, with our limited modern experience, we are disposed to regard the preaching of this Kingdom as eminently favourable to peace and order. Very different, however, was the light in which it would appear to Herod and his advisers. For, to the Jews, the Kingdom of Heaven meant, primarily, the establishment of the visible Kingdom of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and their own liberation under the leadership of the Messiah. Such a doctrine could not be publicly preached in his dominions, without exciting apprehensions, which would become strengthened in proportion to the success of the preacher. It was only natural, therefore, that he should, as Josephus relates, have decided to crush the movement before it had attained any formidable proportions, by the seizure and execution of the leader ; and, possibly, also by the dispersion of his followers.

The story of the death of John, as we read it in the Gospels, is precisely such a legend as obtains currency among the populace, who are always ready to find petty personal motives at the bottom of all public proceedings. The curious in such matters may find numerous analogous instances, both in history, so-called, and in fable. The whole picture of the scene at which the death of John was decided—the banquet—the youthful maiden called in to dance for the gratification of the guests—the extravagant admiration of the monarch—and the fatal oath it prompts—the suggestion of Herodias—the request of her

daughter—the regret, and hesitation, and final compliance of the King—the tragic end of the Baptist—and the severed head brought upon a dish into the hall of feasting—show throughout the shaping influence of the legend. It is quite possible, perhaps upon the whole most probable, that the only elements of truth in the whole story are, that Herod had contracted a marriage which seemed to his subjects to justify, and even to demand, the reprobation of such a preacher of righteousness as John, and that, in fact, John was imprisoned and put to death by his orders: the connection between these two events, and the mode in which the sentence of death was procured, being due entirely to the transforming power of the popular imagination.

The Synoptical Gospels concur in representing Jesus as having been attracted from Galilee by the report of the preaching of John, and as having received baptism at his hands. And they all agree in stating that on the occasion of his baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon him.¹ It is, however, open to question whether the descent of the Spirit was intended to be represented as having been visible to the bystanders, or only to Jesus; and, on the whole, the latter is the more probable conclusion. Certainly there is nothing in any of these Gospels to show that the attention either of the people or of John was specially directed to Jesus by the occurrence, or that any persons were induced to attach themselves to him on account of their having witnessed it. And this appears to furnish an answer to the various rationalistic explanations of the circumstance, regarded as some real outward event, misunderstood by the crowd. It is not easy to explain how anything so wonderful, which the spectators must be supposed to have understood as marking so emphatic a recognition of the divine character of

¹ The agreement of the fourth Gospel in the representation that Jesus visited John, shews that this fact was too firmly rooted in Christian tradition to be omitted, but the modifications introduced into the account indicate that at that time the difficulties connected with the reception of baptism by Jesus were beginning to be felt.

Jesus, could have been entirely forgotten. A visible and audible manifestation, such as is usually assumed, must assuredly have left some trace upon the future history; and could scarcely have passed so completely out of memory that no one among the multitudes with whom he was brought into contact during his public career, ever founded or justified a recognition of his claims upon this ground. If, indeed, it is understood as designed to indicate only an impression received by Jesus himself, that the form and the voice was perceived by him alone; then it may be no more than a symbolical representation of the belief afterwards entertained that he was at this moment endowed with the Spirit of God, and thus impelled and enabled to devote himself to his work.¹

It is possible, if the baptism of Jesus was really a turning point in his life,—if, awakened or stimulated by the preaching of John, he had at this moment formed the resolution and embraced the idea that were thenceforth to be the animating principles of his life,—that he might have referred to the subject in such a manner as to give rise to the belief subsequently entertained. But it is also possible that we have here only an instance of the gradual development of the legend, which required that this act of Jesus, in which he appeared for the moment in a position of inferiority to John, should be invested with circumstances that might make it the occasion of manifesting only the more signally his intrinsic superiority. And the latter supposition appears the more probable. There is no reason for supposing that the rite of baptism was in reality a crisis in the life of Jesus; and there were abundant dogmatic motives for the formation of such a narrative as we possess; especially, as we may infer, that it was

¹ As a sensible miracle it is purposeless and inconceivable; purposeless, for it produced no effect upon John, or his disciples, or the multitude; and inconceivable, for there is a palpable contradiction in the idea of a divine spiritual manifestation, bounded by a material form, and becoming visible to the eyes of the multitude. And this contradiction becomes, if possible, more flagrant if we adopt the popular supposition that the third person in the Trinity—God, in short—became incarnate in the form of a dove. This may be termed irreverent or blasphemous. Surely, however, the true irreverence, or blasphemy, is in those who entertain such an idea, not in him who exhibits it in its true character.

during his residence with the Baptist that the impressions were received which afterwards induced Jesus to become himself the preacher of the kingdom.

Immediately following the account of the baptism is that of the temptation. Whatever interpretation may be put upon the narrative, it would seem that the retirement into the desert is to be regarded as a period of preparation for the work in which he was about to engage. And it would be only natural that some method of preparation should be adopted. There is nothing in any of the Gospels to indicate that Jesus, previous to his baptism, had done anything to direct attention to himself, or to lead the people to anticipate the position which he subsequently assumed. Probably, therefore, his purpose to become the preacher of the kingdom might be one for the accomplishment of which he felt that he was not at the moment sufficiently qualified. It might be needful that a period of meditation—reading, prayer, and self-discipline—should be passed through before he could venture to present himself to his countrymen. Whether the account of the temptation answers to any real incidents occurring during this period,¹ or symbolizes any actual mental struggles; or whether it is a mere mythical representation growing out of the later views, as to the antagonism between the devil, as the representative of the powers of this world, and Jesus as the appointed head of the Kingdom of Heaven, which led the disciples to assume that this must have been exhibited in the beginning by assaults or temptations successfully resisted, it is impossible now to do more than conjecture. There is nothing intrinsically improbable in the suggestion recently made, that Jesus might have described the mental temptations by which he was assailed, while meditating his great enterprise, in language that, to the limited apprehensions of his followers, gave a colour to the views exhibited in the story. This is, after all, only an hypo-

¹ Such as suggested by some rationalizing commentators of emissaries to enlist him in the service of the Jewish rulers or others. These, however, would imply a notoriety then attaching to Jesus which the story, by implication, contradicts.

thesis, which saves the sincerity of the evangelists at the expense of their understanding ; and would compel us to ask how far we can receive any relation they have given of the teaching of Jesus, when, in this particular, they could so grossly misapprehend him.

The only absolutely certain conclusion upon the subject is, that the events could not have occurred as narrated. That the devil should have power, miraculously, to transport the body of Jesus from place to place—from the desert to the pinnacles of the Temple, and from the Temple to a high mountain—is as inconceivable upon theological as upon physical grounds, to those who regard Jesus as God, as to those who look merely to the properties of matter and the laws of gravitation. For, upon the orthodox view, it would imply either that Satan has power to work real miracles, even upon the Deity itself, or that God endowed him with that power upon this occasion. The former must surely be rejected by every true believer. The latter reduces the whole affair to a mockery, in which Satan is at once the tempter and the tool of Divinity, and Jesus the conscious contriving agent of his own temptation. It can, therefore, only be received by the ignorant or wilful credulity of those who renounce all exercise of reason upon matters which they are told, or have persuaded themselves, that it is their duty to believe. And such persons have no right to scoff at the believers in modern miracles, or to reject the marvels of witchcraft.¹

We conclude, then, that Jesus became a disciple of John, and was baptized by him—that the earliest form of Christian tradition represented him as previously unknown, and as hav-

¹ It might seem that any exposure of the incredibility and profaneness of the narrative, taken literally, is needless. But modern commentators (*e.g.* Dean Alford) still reproduce the old interpretations, and, recently, in a weekly publication for the Sabbath reading of the young, the subject is illustrated by an engraving, in which a grotesque mediæval devil is pointing out the kingdoms of the world to an obviously divine Jesus. What right have such men to complain of the spread of Ritualism, when they do all in their power to keep the minds of their readers upon the precise level of thought and feeling to which Ritualism appeals ?

ing received the impulse and inspiration that led him to devote himself to his work, and qualified him for its performance, at the moment of his baptism ;—that this purpose was, in fact, formed while he was with John, and that it was probably succeeded by a period of retirement, during which it was matured and confirmed, amid many internal struggles. This seems to be little ; but it is as much as we have any right to expect to know ; and, unless we are prepared to accept the marvels of the Apocryphal Gospels, this is as much as we can know. For, even if we receive whatever the Synoptical Gospels relate, it is still clear, from the subsequent history, that nothing had occurred in the life of Jesus, before his public appearance as a preacher, to prepare his countrymen to receive him in that capacity. And the only difference would be to make the inspiration he received due to some palpable and visible impersonation of the Spirit, and the struggles to be with temptations without, instead of trials and difficulties within.

There are, however, questions suggested by this brief summary to which we may attempt an answer. We may, probably, assume that Jesus had received, at least, the ordinary education of a Jew, whose circumstances, though humble, according to our western ideas, were still easy ; that he had become familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, and that he had learned something of the tradition of the Scribes. Probably, he had followed the trade of his father, Joseph ; and it may be regarded as certain that, if he had not shewn any qualities that led his family, his friends, or the public, to expect his appearance as a teacher, there was nothing in his character or conduct that could be urged to his discredit. Presumably, he had become dissatisfied with the traditional interpretation of the Scriptures that were current among the recognized teachers of the day, and felt the need of something that should restore to Psalmist and Prophet their primitive significance, and even give to them a higher and more spiritual sense. With these feelings, too, were associated impatience at the protracted do-

minion of the Gentiles, and aspirations for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.¹ Some such feelings we may assume to have been the motives for his journey from Galilee to the Jordan, for the purpose of listening to the preaching of John. And we are further compelled to believe that he also felt the need of that "baptism for the remission of sins," in view of the coming kingdom which John preached. Upon any other supposition it is inconceivable that Jesus should have submitted to the rite, unless, indeed, we attribute to him a degree, not merely of dissimulation, but of simulation, strangely at variance with the orthodox view of his character, which nothing in his history appears to justify.

The people who gathered around John and became his disciples were baptized, "confessing their sins," and the baptism was that of "repentance to the remission of sins." Jesus, therefore, on being baptized, must have been understood by all who witnessed the ceremony, or were made aware that it had been performed, to have confessed his sins, and to have been baptized for their remission. And even if we could suppose the formal protest of John, related in the first Gospel, to have preceded the ceremony (though, if so, it is not easy to understand why it should have been omitted from the second and third); yet this, while it implies John's recognition of the superiority of Jesus, does not, and cannot, imply the attribution of absolute sinlessness. At the utmost, it suggested a relative superiority, founded, it may be, upon intuition, or upon previous knowledge or repute, but certainly not the possession by Jesus of that perfect goodness which every pious Jew believed, and which he himself afterwards declared, to be the attribute of one only—that is, God. And even if any one should assume that it did involve this, and that John was so pure and holy, that no one having the slightest stain

¹ According to the received chronology, Jesus would, probably, have been nearly ten years of age at the time of the revolt of Judas. Quite old enough, therefore, to receive an indelible impression from the incidents he witnessed, and the feelings expressed by those among whom he dwelt.

of sin could be his superior (an assumption contradicted by the declaration of Jesus, that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than John), then the two would be represented as profaning a solemn rite by employing it when it was nothing but a mockery, and as deceiving the multitude by falsely holding Jesus out to them as a person who needed that his sins should be confessed, and should be washed away by the baptismal water. We can form no other conclusion, therefore, than that Jesus recognized his human infirmity and his actual shortcomings, and, consequently, felt that he also needed to be baptized, confessing his sins.

It would be interesting to know, if that were practicable, how long Jesus remained with John, and to what extent he learned from him. It has been suggested that his stay was but brief, and that he speedily became dissatisfied with the meagreness and insufficiency of John's doctrine.¹ Perhaps, however, it is more probable that he remained until the preaching of the Baptist was cut short by his imprisonment, and that the distinction he afterwards drew between his manner of life and that of his precursor was due rather to after-development, than to a difference that existed during their intercourse. And this view is seemingly confirmed by the circumstance that in the fourth Gospel Jesus is described, in opposition to the earlier Gospels, as having begun his public ministry before the imprisonment of John; a statement which has no historical probability, and appears to have been suggested by a desire to represent the teaching of Jesus as more independent of that of John than was actually the case. It must be left undetermined whether Jesus separated himself from John while the latter was at liberty and continued to preach, or whether his determination to make known the good news of the coming kingdom was formed after the career of John had been cut short, and when, consequently, the work would have ceased had not Jesus

¹ The opinion that the teaching of John was meagre and insufficient, rests apparently upon nothing but the arbitrary assumption that the precepts attributed to him in the third Gospel form a complete summary of his doctrine.

been prepared to take it up. The former view rather results from the actual form of the narrative in the first three Gospels; but the latter would seem to be the more probable, from the circumstance in which they all agree, that the preaching of Jesus did not actually commence until after he had been made aware of the imprisonment of John.

Between, however, his resolve and its realization there was that interval to which we have referred, described by the Evangelists as being led by (Matthew), or in (Luke) the Spirit, or being driven by the Spirit (Mark) into the wilderness, and being tempted by the Devil. Into the solitary musings and struggles of that period we have no reliable means of entering. Thus far we are safe in going. Jesus knew that he was devoting himself to a work of labour, suffering, and peril. He had the record of the fate of those who had preceded him, and from this he might learn to anticipate the doom that probably awaited himself. The lesson which these examples taught was presumably intensified by the imprisonment that had befallen and the death that threatened the Baptist. He himself was about to encounter the scorn of the Pharisees, whose traditions he disregarded, and whose ritualism he opposed; and the enmity of the Sadducees, whose conservative tendencies he rudely assailed; and his conduct would provoke the jealousy of the rulers of the land. He had no hope of support but in the multitude, excitable and easily moved, but incapable of combined action, and slow to receive any permanent impression—ready to welcome and crowd around any one who should come to them preaching the arrival of the acceptable time, and equally ready to desert him in the period of trial and danger; hearing the word of the kingdom, and with joy receiving it, but having no root in themselves, and falling away when persecution arose. And we cannot but suppose that, previous to his final decision, Jesus had weighed all these contingencies, and had counted the cost of the enterprise.

There are, it is true, indications of a brief period of popularity,

after he had entered upon his public functions, which seems almost to have led him to hope that he might escape the doom that had befallen so many of his predecessors ; but, in the interval between the conception of his undertaking and its actual commencement, although, doubtless, he was animated by the hope of success, he could not but anticipate the possibility of failure ; and he must have prepared himself to encounter that contingency with all that it involved. He might not be able to foresee whether his death, should he be doomed to die, was to be due to the hostility of the men of tradition, or to the fears of the conservative party, or to the stern repression of the Roman Governors ; but, in entering upon a course that would bring him into conflict with all of these, he could not but expect death at the hands of one or other. It is, therefore, easy to understand that his ultimate resolution was preceded by many doubts and much hesitation, and even that his internal struggles might appear to him, as similar struggles did afterwards to Luther in a like interval of solitude and inaction, as in part the result of Satanic suggestions, and, indeed, as implying the actual bodily presence of the adversary.

We do not, on that account, suppose that the narrative we possess, in the extended form in which it is presented in the first and third Gospels, is founded upon any details furnished by Jesus himself. This might be the shape which the general statement that he was tempted of the devil, if it were made, might assume in the popular report. If Jesus himself had described his temptations, they would assuredly have been of a different character. For, in their actual shape, they would have exerted little of seductive influence upon his mind.¹

¹ There is something very attractive in the suggestion that the first temptation (in the first Gospel) was that Jesus should employ his power of working miracles for his own personal comfort, and not for the purpose of his mission ; the second, that he should disregard all natural laws in reliance upon divine support ; and the third, that he should purchase success for his enterprise by unworthy compliance with the falsehood or formalism of the age. But these are ideas that would not have suggested themselves to the generation in which the narrative originated, and would really have been unintelligible to them. And, it is obvious, that these forms of temptation were selected not with reference to any ideal meaning they might convey, but to the texts by citing which Jesus repelled the tempter.

And, after all, it is only a matter of conjecture that Jesus really believed himself to have been so tempted. We can, however, scarcely be mistaken in supposing that he, who in his brief after career so forcibly taught the necessity of calculating beforehand all that was involved in an enterprise, who knew the insecurity and fleeting character of popular support, and the fate reserved for all prophets, had in this critical moment weighed his own resources, and the difficulties and danger of the contemplated undertaking.

From the whole narrative, then, we infer that Jesus, before he withdrew to the desert, was a disciple of John, unknown and undistinguished from the other disciples, and with no apparent purpose of emerging from obscurity, and that after his retirement he came forth to assume the place that had become vacant by the imprisonment of John, and to commence the career that led to Gethsemane and Calvary. It is probable, therefore, that the teaching of John gave form and consistency to the thoughts which had led Jesus from Galilee to become his disciple; that the imprisonment of John suggested the necessity that some one should take up the work which had been interrupted by his removal; that an inward consciousness of fitness impelled Jesus to assume the place; and that the retirement into solitude was the needful self-preparation for the difficulty and danger of the task.

CHAPTER III.

THE HERALD OF THE KINGDOM.

THE first public appearance of Jesus after leaving the retreat to which he is represented as having withdrawn, subsequently to his baptism, took place in Galilee. News of the imprisonment of John are stated to have reached him in his retirement, and to have decided him to come forth and assume the functions that the Baptist had been compelled to relinquish. And his original doctrine is stated to have been identical with that previously taught by John—Repentance, in view of the immediate coming of the Kingdom of Heaven.¹

The course pursued by Jesus differed from that of John in two particulars, which would at once indicate a marked distinction between them in the popular apprehension. He discouraged asceticism, both practically and in his teaching, and he did not form any society. With regard to the former of these there can be no question; and the latter seems to be clearly indicated by the history. Throughout the first Gospel the term “disciples” is almost always employed to designate the twelve, or at least a narrow circle closely attached to the person of Jesus,—always, in fact, unless in the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, where the context compels us to give it a wider signification. And there is nowhere in the Synoptics a hint of any ceremony of initiation, or of anything that implies

¹ Matt. iii. 1, 2. “In those days came John the Baptist preaching, and saying, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” iv. 17. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

the admission of members into a society. The mark of a disciple appears to have been that he should leave all and follow Jesus, and this seems only to have been required or permitted in the case of the twelve. His teaching, however, was not, at any rate at first, confined to this narrow circle. All men might listen to his discourses, and from them might learn the conditions of entrance into the kingdom, and we have no grounds for supposing that junction with a visible society formed any part of these conditions. The silence of Jesus upon this point, and the entire absence in the Synoptical Gospels of all reference to any form of admission, appear to prove conclusively that no society was, in fact, constituted.

This might, perhaps, be due, in part, to considerations of expediency, and, in part, to a matured conviction that the Kingdom of Heaven was to be established "not by might nor by power" of man, but by the sole instrumentality of Jehovah. Every previous effort for its foundation had failed, solely because of the human elements it embraced. Even John, though relying primarily on moral influences, had been imprisoned because he had attempted to aid these by organizing his disciples. And any similar proceeding could not but arouse the suspicion of the authorities, and force an excuse for their interference; a consideration of these circumstances might naturally inspire a doubt whether human agencies could, in fact, be necessary, whatever might be the popular feelings upon the subject. When the Son of Man was manifested in the clouds of heaven, he would surely not require any help from man, for his own power would suffice to overcome all resistance. What, therefore, was wanted, in view of the coming kingdom, was not an external organization, but repentance and amendment. God might be trusted to do his own work, and all that was necessary for men was that they should qualify themselves by a change of heart and of life to share in the promised blessings.

There is nothing in any of the Gospels to explain the reasons which induced Jesus to select Galilee as the scene of his labours.

None of them suggest that any persecution was directed against the followers of John. It is not improbable, however, that his arrest was followed by measures for the dispersion of his disciples; and, if not, Jesus might well have feared lest the same motives, whether real or assumed, of apprehension for the public tranquillity, that had been alleged by Herod as his ground for imprisoning John, might lead him at once to prevent any one from preaching the same doctrine in the same place. Or, it might be, that he anticipated a more favourable reception in the district in which he had grown up, and where he was personally known. Possibly, both of these considerations had their influence. There must have been abundant reason to dread the interposition of Herod; and Jesus might well have supposed, until enlightened by experience, that those who had witnessed the promise of his youth would be favourably disposed towards him in the new character he was about to assume. He might even anticipate that they would welcome him the more readily, because of the lustre his preaching would confer upon the country of which he was a native. Whatever were his motives, he abandoned the field in which John had laboured, and returned to Galilee, where he at once commenced preaching.

The first act of Jesus, after the assumption of his public functions, as recorded in the two earliest Gospels, is the calling of four of his disciples—Simon, who was surnamed Peter, and Andrew his brother, the sons of Jona; and James and John, his brother, the sons of Zebedee, all of whom were fishermen, and resided on the shores of the Lake of Gennessaret. Then, of these, Peter, and James, and John, appear in the earliest accounts to have been especially distinguished by Jesus; having been selected by him as his companions in some of the most noticeable incidents of his life. The manner of their calling, as represented in the first Gospel, forcibly illustrates the recollection retained by the disciples of the excitement produced by the early preaching of Jesus, and the enthusiasm awakened towards

himself. There is a single peremptory summons addressed to each; and, without hesitation or delay, they leave their father and their business and devote themselves to Jesus, with a constancy that never appears to have wavered, excepting upon the fatal night in which he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies.

This is one of the instances in which there is a profound and irreconcilable difference between the first and the fourth Gospels.¹ It is not necessary to repeat the reasons, already assigned, for regarding the latter as unworthy of credit. There are some persons who argue that a previous connection between Jesus and these disciples, similar to that described in the fourth Gospel, is necessary, in order to render intelligible the call by Jesus, and its instantaneous acceptance.² Surely this is not required, either from the orthodox, or from the human point of view. For, if able, supernaturally, to understand the character and motives of men, and to influence their will and their conduct, Jesus could have needed no previous acquaintance in order to enable him to exercise this power. And, if not, there is nothing incredible, or even improbable, in the suggestion that his own natural faculty might enable him to see in these men, in spite of their obscure lives and lowly callings, those elements of obedience, and faith, and devotion, which would qualify them to be his disciples, without requiring that another should send them to him for the purpose. Few things, perhaps, more distinctively characterize those men who are born to impress the stamp of their own individuality upon the ideas and institutions of the future, than the apparently intuitive manner in which they are able to recognize in others the existence of those qualities that will

¹ Irreconcilable; that is, if we regard the spirit and intention of the writers, though, no doubt, capable of being reconciled if we look to the mere facts they relate.

² Even in the third Gospel a previous miracle is imagined, in order to explain the immediate obedience of the disciples. This is one of the instances that shew the later composition of that Gospel.

render them useful allies and instruments, and the facility with which they are able to attract and attach such men to themselves. We need not suppose that Jesus had not previously known or been known by the men whom he thus selected. On the contrary, the history would imply that they had grown up together in the same neighbourhood. They might even have been disciples of John at the same time. But it empties the original account of all significance to assume that the relation of Master and disciple had previously existed, and that all Jesus did on the occasion of calling them, was to announce that the time had arrived when he required their more immediate services. That account is most in accordance with the conception we should form of the character and influence of Jesus, from the memorials that have been preserved to us; and if, as is probable, it has been, to some extent, coloured by the medium through which it was transmitted, it is at once more consistent and more probable than that which it is proposed to substitute in its place.

The incidents related in the first Gospel, as occurring in this stage of the public ministry of Jesus, are very few. After calling the four disciples, he traverses the whole of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom, and healing diseases. The report of his preaching and cures draws around him multitudes from all the surrounding country,—from Judaea, and from Jerusalem itself. To these he addresses a body of precepts, which are summed up in the Sermon on the Mount; which, by their depth and originality, and, possibly, still more by the circumstance that they were not based upon tradition, but depended upon the authority of the teacher, and upon their own intrinsic power to command the assent of the understanding and the conscience, deepened an impression in his favour. There is also a record of specific miracles of healing, of stilling the tempest, and of casting out devils. Then there is the first hint of dissatisfaction occasioned by his assuming to absolve from sins.

Then he calls Matthew, the publican, to be his disciple, and accepts his hospitality ; and sends out the twelve apostles as his emissaries, to preach the Gospel beyond the boundaries of Galilee. After this, John the Baptist, from his prison, sends messengers to learn the character in which he claims to appear. And there are at last indications of a reaction, which, aided by the opposition of the Pharisees, goes on, apparently gathering strength, until he leaves Galilee.

In a subsequent chapter we shall attempt to appreciate the character of the doctrines taught by Jesus, and we, consequently, pass them over for the present, confining ourselves to an examination of the facts of the history. Everything appears to suggest that the success of the new preaching was, in the first instance, considerable, and that great enthusiasm was excited by the teacher himself, as well as by his doctrine. And this enthusiasm appears to have been intensified by the performance of cures that were deemed miraculous. It would be impossible, with the materials we possess, to determine with certainty their precise nature, or by what means they were effected. Our ignorance in this respect is, however, no reason for doubting that Jesus did, in truth, perform sudden and wonderful cures, whether permanent or not, at any rate in cases of nervous disorders, and, principally, in those which the superstition of the time attributed to demoniacal possession. The exercise of a similar power, by many of the mediæval saints (to confine ourselves within the limits of Christian tradition), has been described by eye-witnesses, under circumstances that forbid us to disbelieve their statements. We are, therefore, justified in assuming the existence of the power, and in referring it to some exceptional natural influence,¹ though its nature and the mode of its operation are still obscure. And we may be quite certain that, if Jesus really did work such cures, the exaggerating tongue of rumour would multiply and

¹ Probably akin to what is known as animal magnetism.

aggrandize his performances; for this is the invariable course of events.

It would be idle to attempt to disentangle the nucleus of fact from the surrounding atmosphere of legend, or to discriminate, in particular cases, between that which is credible and the reverse. Nor would such a discrimination, even if practicable, avail for the purposes of the present enquiry; for the fact that a given event, regarded as miraculous by those who relate it, appears credible to us under a certain aspect, or with certain deductions, is no ground for believing that it actually occurred. It is better, at once, to confess our ignorance, than to attempt explanations which, however plausible, it is impossible to verify. There is no doubt that every detail of a legendary narrative, even in its most distorted form, is due to some element of fact or of feeling, capable, if we had the requisite materials, of being understood and explained—just as the shifting forms and colours of the clouds, under the influence of the shaping wind and the illuminating sun, have all their determining causes. And in a rough general way we may be able, in either case, to understand the operating laws, and to point out the mode of their operation. If, however, we endeavour to do more than this, we are inevitably baffled, not less by the complexity of the phenomena, than by our want of knowledge of some of the influencing elements; and hence whatever theory may be formed necessarily fails in some particular. With regard to the miracles attributed to Jesus, it is possible that natural events, imperfectly understood at first, and made more marvellous with every repetition of the story, may be the basis of some of the accounts. Unconscious invention, as when a figure was transformed into a fact, or a parable accepted as a history, may have been the source of others. The belief that, as Jesus was the equal or the superior of the old prophets, he must have performed works similar to or greater than they, or that, as the Messiah, he must have done whatever the Messiah was expected to do,

may account for some. Sometimes, especially in the fourth Gospel, it is difficult not to suspect conscious invention, at least in the details. And there may have been other influences, of which we know nothing. Whoever thinks that because an anonymous narrative, composed from thirty to forty years after the occurrences it records, and in a different place, has been copied by other writers and has received the sanction of the Church, it is therefore sufficient to prove that new matter, or new force, was created, as in the case of the miraculous feedings of the multitude; or that the laws of gravitation were suspended, as in the case of walking on the water; or that physical power was exerted by the will upon the waves of the sea; or that the dead were raised to life, will accept all the narratives with equally implicit faith. And those who do not so think may, nevertheless, be convinced that there was something in the character, and acts, and doctrine of Jesus that predisposed a credulous age to believe in his performance of such wonders, and may accept that belief as, in some degree, a proof of his intrinsic superiority.

There may, no doubt, also be a third class. Some may deny that any actual miracle has been performed, and yet may give so much credit to the details of the narrative as to suppose that Jesus claimed miraculous power; that though in some instances deceived, he was, in others, a conscious deceiver;—and that for the purpose of satisfying the raised expectations of his disciples and the multitude, he condescended to act the part of the charlatan and quack, if not of the intentional impostor. If the alternative lay between the last and the first of the conclusions we have indicated, so that we were compelled to assume that Jesus professed to have done all that is related of him, and had only to determine whether the alleged miracles were real or pretended, there might be a reasonable ground for the last hypothesis. It must be obvious to any one who carefully weighs the nature and limits of testimony, that the narratives we possess do not satisfy the con-

ditions of proof of such events, if taken to be miraculous. And it will always be more probable that an enthusiastic reformer should sanction a pious fraud, than that he should be able to create new matter, or by his mere volition, and, apart from the ordinary material antecedents, set in motion and control the forces of nature. But, in fact, the very admission that the evidence is not to be believed, because it does not suffice to prove the supernatural, forms a sufficient reason for discrediting it altogether, so far as these incidents are concerned. There can be no doubt that this very supernatural character of the acts in question was what the writers understood and intended to convey. It is, therefore, altogether unreasonable to refuse credit to them in that which they regarded as the essential feature of the story, and, nevertheless, to insist upon their substantial accuracy in the details, which, to them, were merely accessory. And this is especially the case when their assumed accuracy in details is made the foundation of an attack upon the intelligence or honesty of the subject of their biography. At the lowest, it is illogical and arbitrary to insist upon saving the credit of the anonymous authors of the Gospels for historical correctness, at the expense of the integrity of Jesus. We know nothing of the former that would lead us to believe them to be above the common opinions of the day, or to suppose that they would be unwilling to relate any incident current among the disciples, without scrutinizing the evidence upon which it rested. We do, however, know enough of Jesus, in the doctrines he taught, and the impressions he produced upon those brought into contact with him, to lead us to believe that his views of the obligations of truthfulness and honesty were far above those of the majority of his contemporaries. It is, therefore, more probable that the Gospel narratives in these particulars are mistaken or exaggerated, than that, on the one hand, actual miracles were wrought, or, on the other, that Jesus falsely pretended to work them.¹

¹ Even if I believed, with M. Renan, that the Apostle John was the author of the fourth Gospel, I should still rather suppose that in a place where he could exercise

This conclusion is strengthened by various other considerations. The miracles related in the Synoptics are alleged to have been performed in Galilee, and the first Gospel was composed in Jerusalem. It does not, therefore, as commonly assumed, represent the Galilæan tradition, but that of the Church in Jerusalem. The others were composed, probably, at Rome; certainly, outside of Judæa. They have, consequently, no support from the assumed belief of the people in whose presence the works were wrought, testified by the existence of such a tradition among them. On the contrary, the mission of Jesus, so far as Galilee is concerned, appears to have ended in failure. There is no record in history, or tradition in the Acts,¹ or in the early Fathers, of the existence of any Church in Galilee.² And almost the last words spoken by Jesus, in reference to the people of that district, contain the mournful protest and emphatic denunciation of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum,—the cities in which he had preached and wrought his marvellous works. It was in reference to these, also, that he drew the contrast between the men of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, and the Queen of the South, who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and the generation that repented not, though in the presence of a greater than either. It is true that we are not warranted in relying upon the verbal accuracy of the report of these sayings. We are, however, justified in regarding them as evidencing the ultimate incredulity with which the pretensions of Jesus were regarded among those who, according to the earliest accounts, had witnessed the whole of the wonders that he wrought.³ Without pressing this argument, it is his fancy without check or control, he had invented the account of the raising of Lazarus, than that Jesus actually took part in such a scene as M. Renan describes.

¹ Excepting one passage upon which no one would venture to build, *Acts ix., 31.*

² M. Renan, in "Les Apôtres," assumes that there must have been, but he admits that there is no proof of any sort that there was such a church.

³ It is not without significance, under this aspect of the case, that, in the earliest forms of the account of the resurrection of Jesus (*Matt. xxviii., 7-10; Mark xvi., 6, 7*), Galilee is intimated as the place in which the disciples were to see him—implying that they did not see him in Jerusalem.

obvious that we are not entitled to draw any inference as to the reality of the miracles alleged to have been wrought by Jesus, on the ground that the people among whom they were wrought, on that account, believed in him as the Messiah, for there is no evidence that they did so believe.

There is another circumstance bearing upon this question that must not be left out of sight. The Scribes and Pharisees are represented as opposing Jesus, and as rejecting his claim to be a divinely commissioned teacher. They admitted that he cast out devils, but they alleged that he had been gifted with that power by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. This, with modern Protestant apologists, is regarded as the least of all the proofs of supernatural power manifested by Jesus. And it would have been regarded in a similar light by the Jews, for many among them were supposed to have been gifted with a similar power.¹ It will hardly be suggested that these opponents of Jesus admitted that he was able to raise the dead, to cleanse the leper, to give sight to the blind, and to restore strength to the paralytic; or that they would have allowed him to claim this ability without challenging his pretensions. Nor can it be pretended that they were awed by these exhibitions of a higher nature, and, therefore, dared not dispute their divine origin; for this feeling would have equally extended to all the miracles performed by Jesus. The natural course for them to have adopted, if it was understood that Jesus claimed or was believed to possess the power of working these greater wonders, would have been to have referred them to diabolical aid. That they are represented as being silent on the subject, therefore, can scarcely be regarded in any other light than as a tacit admission that there was nothing really understood to have been done by Jesus, excepting the casting out devils, which his opponents considered to display any supernatural powers.

Still, it may be said: 'The Apostles believed in Jesus as the

¹ Matt. xii., 27, and the instance of Eleazar mentioned by Josephus.

Messiah, and they had witnessed all these miracles ; their belief, consequently, must have been founded upon what they had seen, and it would be presumptuous to pronounce such a belief a delusion.' There might be some force in this argument if we could conclude that the belief of the Apostles must have been founded upon material miracles ;—that the truth, wisdom, love, and holiness of Jesus were powerless by themselves, even with those who daily witnessed their display, and needed to be supplemented by the outward manifestation of signs and wonders. But are we entitled so to think of the Apostles ? It would seem not ; excepting upon the hypothesis that the exhibition of supernatural power was regarded by the Jews as an absolute test of Messiahship, so that no one could be believed in as the Messiah excepting upon the ground of his having performed miracles. Undoubtedly, if this had been the case, it would be competent for any one to argue that the belief in a particular person as the Messiah must have been preceded by such manifestations, though it would still be an open question what particular wonders would satisfy that condition, and whether it would need, for its fulfilment, a miracle in our strict modern sense. But, in fact, there is no pretence for such a hypothesis. Not to mention the various persons who were regarded by the Jews, or, at any rate, by numbers among them, to be the Messiah, but whom no one in the present day would suppose to have wrought actual miracles, the instance of John the Baptist is conclusive ; for it is obvious that those who were convinced by his preaching, were prepared to have accepted him as the Messiah upon that ground alone, without requiring any miraculous attestation. And with regard to Jesus, whatever might be the actual grounds upon which the faith of those who believed in him rested, it seems certain that he refused to authenticate his mission by any sign, and rebuked those who would not believe without seeing one.¹

¹ Matt. xii., 33 ; xvi., 1-4.

It may, indeed, be said that there are other passages in which Jesus is represented as asserting his power to work miracles, and claiming acceptance on that account; and this is true. But, whatever may be the explanation of this seeming inconsistency, it remains a fact that he condemned those who made their recognition of his claim conditional upon the display of miraculous power; and that, consequently, if truly reported in this respect, he did not consider, or allow his disciples to consider, that the performance of miracles was a necessary part of the Messianic character. And it must be remembered that there could have been no motive for untruly attributing these words to Jesus, or for exaggerating them. And if, in truth, there had been one act performed by him in the presence of friends and foes—the Scribes and Pharisees as well as his own disciples,—to which he could have referred, as being such a sign as his gainsayers demanded, it is difficult to understand his reported silence upon the subject; or that he should have referred to the sign of the prophet Jonah—the presence of the preacher calling to repentance—instead of boldly resting his claim upon that proof of supernatural power which they had witnessed. But, then, if Jesus expected the indifferent or the hostile to believe without a sign, and reproved them for their incredulity in not so believing, he might assuredly anticipate an equal measure of faith from those who were his friends and followers, and who were accustomed to listen with affection and reverence to all the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. The fact, consequently, that these men did believe in him furnishes no proof that they had been induced to believe by the miracles they had witnessed.

There does not appear, therefore, any ground for assuming that the faith in Jesus, whether as a teacher sent from God or as the Messiah, could only have been the result of the actual display by him of powers which a more instructed age would regard as supernatural, or even which the Apostles or the multitude did so regard. It is possible and even probable

that many of his acts were looked upon as miraculous; but it does not follow that belief in him was conditional upon this opinion, or that those acts would be viewed in the same light by ourselves. The most probable conclusion appears to be that Jesus possessed exceptional, but not absolutely unparalleled, powers of healing, the results of which were regarded as supernatural, and that all the other marvels related to have been performed by him are due to later exaggerations.

In his twofold character as a preacher of the good news of the Kingdom, and as a healer of diseases, Jesus became for a time the object of popular enthusiasm. Multitudes gathered round him to listen to his discourses and to witness his cures, and, wherever his footsteps were turned, he was followed by admiring crowds, and met with a favourable reception.

To whatever causes this early popularity might have been owing, all indications appear to show that it was comparatively short-lived; though, in the total absence of any reliable marks of time in the earlier Gospels it is impossible to determine how long it really continued. From what we know, or may surmise, of the state of feeling in Galilee, we should be disposed to conjecture that any one preaching the near approach of the Kingdom would receive attention. And we may believe that, in the case of Jesus, the nature of his teaching, and his own personal qualities, combined with this predisposition to attract great interest to himself. But it would not be probable that any qualities, however eminent, or any teaching however elevated, could sustain the interest that had been awakened when, in fact, the promised advent was indefinitely delayed. How many months or weeks might elapse in the interval between the first flush of excitement and the inevitable reaction, between the joyful enthusiasm of the early days, and the sickness of hope deferred that succeeded, it is impossible to estimate; probably, the period was but brief. The times were not favourable for the lengthened maintenance of

an attitude of patient waiting. The transference of Judæa from the dominion of Archelaus to the more immediate rule of Rome had exasperated the feelings of national discontent, and had rendered both Judæa and Galilee still more ready to welcome any one who promised a termination to the existing state of things, but, at the same time, still more impatient at any delay in the fulfilment of the promise. The prolonged idyllic period of joyful hope, in which the youthful prophet, followed by a band of admiring followers, traversed the yet undesolated land, awakening everywhere the peaceful enthusiasm of the people, and almost realizing the enjoyments of the Kingdom whose coming he heralded, that has been depicted with so felicitous a pencil by M. Renan, is hardly compatible with the actual realities of the age and country. The sanguinary rule of the great Herod had been succeeded by a period of disorder and tumult—of insurrection on the part of the people, and of merciless repression on the part of their rulers,—which continued, with occasional intermission, until the final outbreak that ended in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. In all these movements Galilee sympathized, and in many it shared. There was no period during which the people were sufficiently free from the excitement of remembered, or actual, or anticipated conflict, to have been capable of yielding themselves to the charm of such an existence as M. Renan has imagined. They were ready to listen to any one who announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, for that implied deliverance from the hated yoke of the Gentile. And they would be ready also to listen to his exhortations to amendment of life, and to the new, and loftier, and more spiritual interpretation he might give to the lessons of their law. But this was only on the condition that the realization of his predictions should speedily follow their proclamation. And when this condition was not fulfilled, they would, for the most part, fall away from him as rapidly as they had been, in the first instance, attracted.

It is not easy to realize the position that Jesus occupied at this time; perhaps it is impossible to do so fully. Our sources of information are scanty and imperfect at the best, and those that are the most reliable, are not only themselves tinged by the imagination of the author, but they have been so overlaid by the accumulated associations of centuries, that it is scarcely possible to penetrate through these and to look at the scenes they depict from the contemporary point of view. It is not the simple artisan, moved by some inward impulse to assume the office of preacher of the Kingdom, journeying on foot from city to city, accompanied by a few disciples of humble birth and narrow means,¹ accepting frankly the ready hospitality of his admirers, violating the received rules for keeping the Sabbath, indifferent to ceremonial cleanliness, purposely shocking the prejudices of the multitude by his disregard of established practices, and, apparently, not over select in the choice of his associates, that rises to our mind when we think of the human life of Jesus. All of these features are, no doubt, plainly depicted, or suggested, in the earlier Gospels, and each of them, separately, may be occasionally dwelt upon. But they are never united into a whole. Sometimes two or more may be combined, but, in that event, their real aspect is softened or excluded, and they are associated with other loftier characteristics which, even if truly belonging to Jesus, must have been unknown to his contemporaries, and could not, therefore, have affected his position among them. Most frequently, however, the picture that we form is purely imaginary, and

¹ In the Acts of the Apostles iv., 13, two of the most prominent among them, Peter and John, are spoken of as unlearned and ignorant men; but, perhaps, we are not entitled to draw any inference from this, as the object of the writer may only be to place in stronger relief their courageous behaviour in presence of the Sanhedrim. It is obvious, however, that he did not suspect the literary powers that, on the common theory, were possessed by both, and in an eminent degree by John; though the Apocalypse must have been written at the time. The tradition, however, which attributes the composition of the "Logia" to Matthew, suggests that the Apostles were really "unlearned and ignorant." His selection for the purpose can best be accounted for on the supposition that he could write and the others could not.

abstracted from all the historical details. We call up an ideal embodiment of the qualities of humility, benevolence, wisdom, and virtue, without allowing it to be marred by the presence of the inevitable accompaniments of poverty, or sullied by the actual contact of vice. And, under some aspects, this is natural and allowable; but only so long as we do not forget that those who knew Jesus in the flesh would see, primarily, those very portions of the picture that we keep out of sight, and could only very imperfectly, if at all, look through them to those higher qualities upon which we dwell.

At the same time it would be a mistake to suppose that the impression produced by the circumstances we have described, especially by the poverty of Jesus and his companions, would be necessarily similar to what we, English Protestants, should ourselves receive from them. His own humble condition, and that of his disciples, would of itself form no obstacle to his being recognized by the multitude, and, possibly, even by the more educated classes, as a teacher sent from God—commissioned to announce the approach of the Kingdom, and the terms of admission to its privileges. It had been no unprecedented occurrence in the history of Israel that Divine messengers were taken from the ranks of the people. In the actual state of the nation, indeed, it was from the same ranks that any new impulse must be expected to proceed, since the majority of the wealthier classes deprecated any movement that might provoke a collision with the Roman authority. And the influence of the Mendicant orders in Europe during the Middle Ages, an influence never wholly extinct, and now, apparently, about to revive in unexpected quarters, may teach us that the voluntary abnegation of a fixed position, in order to subsist upon the freewill offerings of disciples, might even raise Jesus in the popular estimation.

If, however, we combine the various scattered notices of character and conduct, so far as they appear trustworthy, we may, perhaps, form a representation of the position of Jesus in this portion of his life as near to the reality as our imperfect

materials and altered stand-point allow. It will not be the utterer of dark sayings of the fourth Gospel, nor the communistic preacher of the third.¹ It will be that of the Prophet of Galilee who traverses the country, visiting all their cities and villages; teaching not only in their synagogues, but on the hill-side, on the road, and in the market-place; entering into the house of whomsoever is worthy, and remaining there; eating and drinking, healing diseases, rebuking sin, and insisting on the necessity of repentance and reformation, but excluding none from his society on the ground of previous ill conduct, or of social position; magnifying the law, by enforcing its claims to obedience, and proclaiming its permanence, but bringing out its true significance, and showing that the obedience required is that of the heart; everywhere, and upon all occasions, seeking to loosen the chains of ceremonialism, not only by argument, but by example; and doing all this in the name of the immediate establishment of that visible kingdom of Jehovah, for which almost all Jews in Palestine,—all, perhaps, excepting the Sadducees,—were waiting.

Before the termination of the first period of popularity two incidents are related that require a particular notice; the calling of Matthew, and the sending forth of the twelve apostles. The former is noticeable because it illustrates the relations of Jesus to a despised class, and is typical of much that was peculiar in his teaching. The Publicans were the agents through whom the Romans collected the public revenue in Judæa and Galilee. They not merely shared the unpopularity that almost everywhere attached to such persons, but were especially odious because their occupation appeared to partake of the nature of sacrilege, interfering with the claim of Jehovah to be the sole ruler of his people. They were for the most part Jews by birth; but this probably added to the contempt and hostility with which they were regarded, by causing them to be considered not

¹ In the next chapter an examination will be attempted of the respective claims of the first and third Gospels, and reasons assigned for the preference given to the first.

merely sacrilegious, but as renegades. And there can be little doubt that their consciousness of the feelings thus excited must have reacted upon their own character; and that they habitually abused their authority to exact more than was due; thus indemnifying themselves for the contempt of which they were the objects, by accumulating wealth at the expense of their despisers. Their position, as has been pointed out by a recent writer,¹ was analogous to that of a tithe proctor in Ireland. They formed an excluded and degraded class, associated in popular phraseology, and in popular sentiment, with sinners; but possessing a certain position by reason of their power and wealth.

The selection of one of this despised profession as an immediate personal disciple, and the acceptance of his hospitality, could not but shock the feelings of all the more rigidly orthodox among the Jews, and, not improbably, did, ultimately, somewhat shake the confidence of the multitude. Two things, however, are to be noticed with regard to the transaction. In the first place, it is implied that Matthew at once abandoned his office and followed Jesus; and in the second place, Jesus justifies his eating with men of this class, on the ground that their very degradation constituted an especial claim upon the services of one who came "not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." So far, then, as this incident is concerned, it would only prove that Jesus did not consider any past conduct to be a ground for excluding from the number of his personal followers a man otherwise qualified for the work, who was willing to repent and reform; and that he desired to shew practically that the privileges of the kingdom were accessible to all, even the most degraded, if they were prepared to comply with the conditions of admission. It may also mark a stage in his career, that when, feeling the difficulty of producing any impression upon the more respectable classes, whose reverence for tradition, and desire to maintain their own standing with the public, pre-

¹ The Rev. Mr. Plumptre.

vented them from following a teacher so unconventional as he had shewn himself to be, he turned to those who had no position to lose, and no prejudices to be shocked. Something of this kind would appear to be indicated by the phraseology in which he justifies his conduct, and his disclaimer of all mission to the "righteous." The full import of this event we shall attempt to estimate, in connection with the character of the teaching of Jesus.

The sending forth of the twelve Apostles was prompted, apparently, by compassion for those who, owing to the necessarily limited sphere of his own preaching, would not have an opportunity of hearing the good news of the Kingdom before its arrival, and thus would lose the opportunity of qualifying themselves, by repentance, to enter it. The preaching of Jesus had been confined to Galilee, but the success that had, up to the period of that mission, attended it, was a hopeful augury of the immediate realization of his prediction. It was, therefore, needful that some steps should be taken to communicate the intelligence to the inhabitants of Judæa, and to call upon them also to repent. This is clearly indicated by the introductory verses¹ in which he is described as moved with compassion for the multitudes, and as comparing the people of Israel to a field ripe for the harvest, but liable to be left ungathered because of the lack of labourers. It is to supply this deficiency that he sends forth the Apostles, and the assumed urgency of the occasion is indicated by the phrase, "ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come." It would seem that their object was merely to announce what had been preached by Jesus himself, and before him by John, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand;" and that they were supposed to have been accredited by a power of healing, and of casting out devils. Their mission was confined to the Children of the Kingdom. They were neither to pass through Samaria, nor to enter into any cities of the Gentiles. And they were to

¹ Matt. ix., 36, *et seq.*

depend for their support upon the unforced hospitality of those to whom they addressed themselves.

So far as we can gather, this measure was not productive of any appreciable result. In the first Gospel the sending forth is related, and the instructions supposed to have been given are detailed in full; but there is no after reference to the subject. And in the second and third Gospels, though the twelve are reported to have exercised the power of healing and that of casting out devils conferred upon them, and are said to have afterwards returned and reported to Jesus their success in these respects, there is nothing to suggest that their preaching, or the wonders they performed, produced any permanent impression. Whatever its object, the mission apparently failed. It brought no new disciples to the side of Jesus, for the apostles returned alone. And there is nothing to indicate that any favourable impression towards himself or his doctrine was produced in any of the places which they had visited. On the contrary, when the report of his preaching had reached the ears of Herod, and called forth expressions that appeared to render a further residence in Galilee unsafe, it is not to any of the places in which he had commanded the apostles to preach that his own footsteps were directed, but to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, which he had forbidden them to visit.

Although, perhaps, we have no grounds for assuming that the mission itself is an after invention, for to that assumption the very aimlessness and inutility of the whole proceeding is apparently opposed, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the account of the instructions of Jesus, given in the first Gospel, has been coloured by the after experience of his disciples.¹

¹ There is a noticeable coincidence between the language here ascribed to Jesus, limiting the missionary labours of the apostles to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and the position assumed by Peter, James, and John, during Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 9), according to which they appear to consider themselves as only entitled to preach the Gospel to Jews. Only, too, in the list of their names here given is the term "apostle" applied to the twelve in the first Gospel, and it is so applied as to exclude the claims of others. And the instructions to depend entirely upon freewill offerings bear upon a matter which we see, from Paul's Epistle, was often urged against him—his providing for his sustenance by his own labour.

These instructions are supposed to have been given in view of a missionary journey to be undertaken in the earlier period of his public ministry, before any active opposition had been excited—a journey that was to occupy but a short period, and from which they were at once to return to him. The silence of the first Gospel, and the accounts of the return of the apostles in the second and third, shew that there was no tradition that they had endured any persecution on the occasion, or even encountered any opposition. On the contrary, the language in which they are described as relating the results of their mission, rather implies its peaceable and successful prosecution, and that they were themselves satisfied with their treatment. To such a mission the warnings and exhortations of the first Gospel are altogether inappropriate, and such as it is impossible to suppose Jesus to have uttered on this occasion. To assume, with some orthodox commentators, that these instructions had not an immediate, but an ulterior object—that they referred not to the journey which the apostles were then about to undertake, but to their after labours in Gentile lands (which they are expressly forbidden to enter), or that the words, “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come,” refer not to their immediate mission, but to the destruction of Jerusalem before the conversion of the Jews was accomplished,—is only one of those desperate expedients that are sometimes employed to save the credit of the Evangelical narratives for absolute accuracy. And even if admitted, it does this at the expense of the intelligence or truthfulness of Jesus. It makes him not a preacher of righteousness, but a mere utterer of dark sayings, alike irrelevant and misleading.

These orthodox interpretations may, however, be accepted as a proof of the improbability that the words were spoken by Jesus on the occasion, and they furnish strong reasons for supposing that we have not here a distorted reminiscence of the instructions actually given, but something subsequently invented. It is most probable, indeed, that the whole passage

is an interpolation. We can hardly imagine that the original author or compiler would have written such an introduction to so uneventful a journey. If he had found these predictions among the sayings commonly attributed to Jesus in the circle whose traditions he collected, it would have been more natural for him to have connected them with the prophecies relating to the second coming, with which in purport and sentiment they are nearly allied, or with some directions for preaching the Gospel among the nations after the death of Jesus, than with a mere passing interlude in his early teaching in Galilee. It is, no doubt, possible that, on one or more occasions, Jesus may have given expression to forebodings like these, and that a reminiscence of them may have been preserved. But it could scarcely have been in this form, or on this occasion, that they were uttered; or that the original writer could have inserted them in this connection.

It will, perhaps, always remain an open question, at what period of his public life Jesus began to regard himself as the Messiah, but it seems quite certain that he was not understood to claim that character at first. He is not represented in any of the first three Gospels as, at this time, asserting his own claims. And the circumstance that, in the first Gospel, his preaching is described in the very same words as those which had been previously used in reference to John the Baptist, shews conclusively that the writer did not intend to assign to him any other character than that of the herald of the Kingdom. In fact, his selection of Galilee as the scene of his labours, is a proof that such was his own view of his office—since the Messiah was to appear in Jerusalem. It is true that he, apparently, lays down the principles of morals authoritatively, and even assumes to substitute the maxims which he promulgates, in the place of those that were popularly supposed to have been revealed by Jehovah to Moses.¹ And it may be suggested that

¹ In arguing from the testimony of Jesus to the authority of the Pentateuch, it should not be forgotten that in many places where the Pentateuch says, "And Jehovah said to Moses," Jesus says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time."

this was inconsistent with the subordinate position that we suppose him to have assumed. But we may see from the commands which the Baptist is reported, in the third Gospel, to have issued to those who sought his instructions, that this was considered a function of the precursor, and, therefore, that the authority assumed by Jesus did not necessarily imply any claim to a higher character. The same had, in fact, been done by the prophets, who also taught as those "having authority." And though they spoke in the name of Jehovah, whom they claimed to represent, and John and Jesus spoke in their own names; yet this difference is accounted for by the change that had occurred in the religious opinions of the Jews.

Something, however, in the person, or works, or doctrine of Jesus appears to have led some among his hearers to surmise in his case, as others are described as having previously done in that of John the Baptist, that he might himself prove to be the Messiah ; and it would appear that, without making any direct claim to that character, Jesus was disposed to encourage these views. It is at this point in the history that the Baptist, for a moment, reappears upon the scene. He is in prison ; but his disciples are not debarred from access to his person ; and from them he receives information of what is taking place outside. It would seem that they had brought to him a report that Jesus, his former disciple, was preaching in Galilee the good news of the Kingdom with an authority and success greater than his own, and that the preaching was accompanied by wonderful works such as he had never claimed to perform. This report appears to have led John to conjecture that Jesus might be the very Messiah, whose coming he had predicted ; but the means which he employed, in order to satisfy himself, imply that no public claim to that character had been made by Jesus. Had such been the case, the message of John would have been different ; for the very form of his enquiry shews that he was prepared to accept the declaration of Jesus himself as to his own character. Nothing, therefore, had been said by Jesus that was

understood by the multitude as making such a claim, or, at any rate, no such claim had been reported to John. And the answer of Jesus, though it may be understood as expressing his own conviction that the works which he had performed ought to be in themselves a proof to all that he was in reality the Messiah whose coming John had announced, does not in terms assert it. In this particular, as in so many others, it is impossible to draw any confident conclusion, on account of our uncertainty with regard to the precise language both of the message of John, and of the reply of Jesus. All, perhaps, that we can venture to affirm, is, that the incident of the message from John is probable in itself, and is not likely to have been invented ; that the writer of the first Gospel did not himself believe or intend to represent Jesus to have this time publicly claimed the higher character ; and that we have no grounds for supposing that any dogmatical prepossession could have led him to suppress the record of such a claim if, in fact, it had been then made.

An argument has frequently been drawn from this message of John against the historical truth of the statement that he had witnessed the heavenly manifestation at the baptism of Jesus, and, in particular, of the statement in the fourth Gospel, that he had pointed out Jesus to his disciples as the Lamb of God ; as though the doubt which the message implies were inconsistent with the confidence he ought in that case to have felt. But the argument thus stated appears not to make sufficient allowance for the necessary flux and reflux of feeling to which even the highest intellects and firmest wills are liable—to the depressing influence of a prison—and to the circumstance that Jesus is represented as only preaching the good news of the Kingdom, instead of, as John in that case might have expected, inaugurating its advent. It seems clear that the strongest belief might for a moment break down under these circumstances, without, on that account, entitling us to doubt its existence, or that it had been originally founded upon what was felt to be demonstrative

grounds. But the difficulty suggested by the narrative in the first Gospel is of a different character. That narrative implies clearly that it was the report of wonderful works performed that first directed the attention of John to Jesus, and led him to surmise that he might be the Messiah, and that but for this report he would not have thought of him in that character. The person who wrote the words, "Now, when John had heard in his prison the works of Christ, he sent unto him two of his disciples," &c., obviously intended to convey the impression that the inquiry was prompted by the report which John had thus heard, and not by any previous knowledge or expectation. The report that Jesus was performing works so wonderful that John in his prison should be told of them, would rather tend to confirm a previous belief, than to excite doubts as to its propriety. That this intelligence should have, in fact, prompted the enquiry, indicates, consequently, that it suggested an opinion as to the character of Jesus which required confirmation from himself; not that it rendered uncertain a previously existing belief, which, on the contrary, it would rather have strengthened.

The inference, then, that we draw from the history up to this point, though we are fully aware that there are particular expressions in the Gospels that may be urged in support of a different conclusion is, that Jesus during the whole of this period refrained from proclaiming himself to be the Messiah; but that it is possible he was gradually inclining to the opinion that he might be such. Probably he was waiting until his own half-formed conviction was ratified by some outward recognition. Even from the supernatural point of view there is nothing improbable in the idea that he should have intentionally allowed his claims to force themselves gradually, but surely, upon the slow apprehension of his disciples, rather than have prematurely assumed a character which they were not yet prepared to recognize. And, from the historical stand-point, it is both natural and consistent that the nascent belief in his own character and destiny, which circumstances appear to have fostered, should

have needed confirmation by some expression of belief from others, and that it could not be otherwise than weak until reciprocated.

It was, apparently, shortly after the return of the Apostles to Jesus that the messengers from John visited him. Their visit appears to have coincided with a period of depression in his own mind, probably resulting from the proof furnished by this uneventful return of the fallaciousness of his expectations as to the period of the manifestation of the Kingdom. In fact, it could scarcely have been otherwise, if he had led the Apostles to believe, what, in that case, he must have believed himself,—that the Son of Man should be manifested in the clouds of heaven, even before they could have completed their journey. And it is possible that the coming of these messengers impressed upon him more forcibly the trifling results of his own labours in the very field which he had himself selected. The mere report of his works had prepared John to believe in him, while those who had witnessed their performance were incredulous and unrepentant. Nay, more, those who had refused to believe in John because of his ascetic practices, rejected him, because he did not refuse to share in the innocent festivities of the people. We should conclude from the account that the messengers of John had come openly, so that their visit and its purport were known to the multitude, and that Jesus had treated the message as a testimony to himself. In referring to it he exalts the character of John in comparison with those who had preceded him; though preserving his inferiority in comparison with those who should actually enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And, recognizing the futility of his own efforts in the districts where he had till then laboured, he solemnly denounces the principal places by name, and predicts that even the cities of the plain, overwhelmed with fire from heaven for their enormities, and Tyre and Sidon desolated by the woes predicted by the Hebrew prophets, would suffer less in the day of retribution than they; not, indeed, because the offences of those had been less heinous, but because

they had not been favoured with the same motives and opportunities for repentance.

From this time it would appear that the opposition to Jesus, of which there are many previous indications, gathered consistency and strength. He is assailed because his disciples, with his sanction, violate the traditional rules for the observance of the Sabbath, and because he selects that day for the performance of a cure in public—in the Synagogue. He is accused of performing his work of casting out devils by the aid of the Prince of the Devils, and he is required to shew some sign in attestation of his mission. And there is no indication upon any of these occasions of his receiving any help or encouragement from the people. On the contrary, it would appear that his retreat to Nazareth was prompted by the entire absence of popular support. In Nazareth, however, he is received with open incredulity, and, finally, hearing of some threatening expressions on the part of Herod, he departs into a desert place. Even here, however, he is represented as being followed by the emissaries of the Pharisees—deputed on this occasion from Jerusalem—and, after an altercation with them, he proceeds to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; hopeless, apparently, of seeing any fulfilment of his prediction in the district of Galilee. And, upon a careful examination of the first Gospel, it would seem that he did not attempt to resume his work in that land. The incidents related as having taken place after his departure for Phenicia, and before the memorable scene at Cæsarea Philippi, seem to be merely duplicates of events already related. And it is not easy to suggest a motive for the visit to Cæsarea Philippi after Jesus had once returned to Galilee; while it would be natural that he should visit that town on his way to Jerusalem, or before undertaking that journey. The consideration of this question, however, belongs more properly to the next stage in his career.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST GOSPEL AND THE THIRD.

BEFORE attempting to estimate the nature of the teaching of Jesus, it is essential to determine the authority we are to follow. This is, in some degree, important, even with regard to the course of events, but it is absolutely necessary with regard to the character of his doctrine. To take one instance, by way of illustration—Did Jesus say, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven ; Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled,” as in the first Gospel ; or did he say, “Blessed are ye poor,” and “Blessed are ye that hunger now,” and accompany these blessings with the corresponding denunciations—“Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation ; Woe unto you that are full, for you shall hunger,” as in the third ? This may be taken as a typical instance, because the difference in the two expressions finds its counterpart in other portions of the teaching. The parable of Lazarus, so strangely misinterpreted by orthodox commentators, is merely an expansion of the blessings and woes pronounced by Jesus in the third Gospel :—“Son, thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and, likewise, Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.” And there are other and yet more fundamental differences between the spirit of the teaching of Jesus, as deduced from the third Gospel, and that which may be drawn from the first. It is obvious, therefore, that unless we are prepared, upon stated grounds, to assign a preponderating

authority to one or the other, it is impossible to decide, with confidence, what was the doctrine really taught by Jesus; unless, indeed, we suppose that his doctrines varied with the occasion, and that to one set of hearers he announced one lesson, and to another the contrary.

Upon such a hypothesis, the proper conclusion would appear to be that, in addition to the Sermon on the Mount, reported by the first evangelist, there was also a sermon on the plain, as reported by the third; going partially over the same ground, but, in some respects, considerably modifying the first teaching; turning that which, on its original delivery, was an encouragement to the poor in spirit—the mourners, the meek, the lovers of justice and of mercy, of purity and of peace—into a communistic eulogium on poverty and denunciation of riches, apart from the spiritual condition of the poor or the rich, the temper in which the one might endure their poverty, or the use to which the others might devote their wealth. And, no doubt, this latter was the light in which the author of the third Gospel understood and intended to represent the teaching of Jesus,—just as in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles he describes the infant Church at Jerusalem as embodying these principles in action, and as essentially communistic in organization and spirit.

It is not in this respect alone that there is a difference between the two Gospels. In the first Jesus is represented as forbidding the Apostles to enter into the cities of the Samaritans, and nowhere is there any indication, in act or in word, that he drew any distinction between them and the Gentiles; that he visited their cities or regarded them with any other feelings than those entertained by the Jews in general. In the third Gospel, however, the prohibition to enter the cities of the Samaritans is omitted, and Jesus is represented as passing through their country on his way to Jerusalem, and resting in one of their villages. And, beside this, on two occasions, once in act, and once in parable, a

Samaritan is presented as a type of gratitude and of benevolence. It is not easy to accept both of these representations as true. If the third evangelist had preserved the prohibition to the disciples to enter into the cities of the Samaritans, many reasons might be suggested to explain the subsequent journey of Jesus himself through their country, though that would still be inconsistent with the character he was about to assume. The omission of all reference to such a command cannot be otherwise than intentional, for the writer could scarcely be ignorant that it was attributed to Jesus. We must, therefore, assume either that he did not believe it to have been given, or that he deliberately suppressed it. In the former case, he could not have regarded the first Gospel as a truthful representation of the teaching of Jesus; in the latter, he furnishes grounds for distrusting his own authority.

Again, the incident of the anointing of Jesus, as related in the first two Gospels, differs so materially from the similar act related in the third, that we must either suppose two separate occasions on which an analogous act was performed by different persons, or that one of the narratives has been coloured by the doctrinal views of the Evangelist who relates it. In the first Gospel (with the account in which the second substantially agrees) the head of Jesus is anointed; the anointing takes place only a day or two before his death, in Bethany, at the house of Simon the leper; there is no question of anything but an act of homage rendered to Jesus, who defends the act as a good work, and refers it, by anticipation, to his coming burial, at which, under the circumstances of danger then surrounding him, he might well suppose that the ordinary ceremony of anointing would be wanting. In the third Gospel, on the contrary, it is the feet of Jesus that are anointed; the anointing is represented as taking place at an earlier period of his ministry, at the house of a Pharisee (who, however, is named Simon), and as being performed by a woman of notoriously bad character, whom, nevertheless, Jesus absolves, solely on the ground of this

manifestation of personal love to himself. Nor is this a solitary instance in which the forgiveness of sins is represented in the third Gospel as the consequence of a single act of sorrow without amendment. The history of the penitent thief, and the parable of the prodigal son, teach the same doctrine ; of which, it may be almost said, there is not a trace in the first Gospel. It is true that Jesus is there represented as coming to seek and to save that which was lost, and as calling not the righteous but sinners to repentance ; but the nature of the repentance required, and the terms of the salvation offered, are indicated with sufficient clearness by the Sermon on the Mount, with the spirit of which the other sayings attributed to Jesus in that Gospel agree. It is imperative, therefore, for any one who wishes to ascertain what was, in fact, the teaching of the historical Jesus, to determine whether the account in the first Gospel or that in the third is to be accepted as authoritative.

The prevailing habit of modern theological teaching in this particular is eclectic. With regard to the Sermon on the Mount, the version of the first Gospel is almost universally followed, so far as the blessings are concerned. In fact, it may be doubted whether, during the last century, any sermon has been published in England having the beatitudes in the third Gospel, with their corresponding denunciations, as its subject. It is true, no doubt, that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is often made the subject of sermon and commentary ; but it is interpreted in a spirit diametrically opposite to that in which it was composed. In fact, all modern Protestant divines import into it the notion of excess and hardheartedness on the part of the rich man, and of holiness on the part of Lazarus, in order to justify to their modern ideas the different fate of each. It is superfluous to say that the parable itself contains not a hint of such a reason. The offence of the rich man is that he is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day. The idea of merit or demerit in either, apart from their wealth or poverty, would never have been suggested except for dogmatic

considerations, and it is, in fact, expressly excluded by the reply of Abraham previously quoted. Abraham professes to justify to the rich man his exclusion from the heaven to which Lazarus is admitted, and the reason which he assigns for that exclusion must be, by every impartial interpreter, accepted as that which to the author of the parable appeared just and sufficient.

In other respects the tendency has been to prefer the view taken in the third Gospel; and that of the first is practically regarded as somewhat savouring of legalism. The penitent thief and the returning prodigal are favourite illustrations; though even they are not received simply in their natural and obvious aspect, but are qualified by conclusions drawn from the teaching of Paul, and of the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This course may be quite unobjectionable so far as the object of the teacher is edification. If the New Testament, as it stands, is to be taken as the source from which the spiritual life of the believer is to be nourished, and from which lessons are to be drawn for his practical guidance, it may be both natural and proper that its various parts should be so selected and combined as may best promote these objects. Such a course is not, however, allowable in the present investigation. Our object is simply historical; to ascertain, if practicable, and as exactly as it is practicable, what Jesus did, and what he taught. We have no prepossession in favour of one or the other representation of his life and doctrine. But we cannot assume that two discrepant, and sometimes even contradictory, accounts are both true; nor can we conclude that they are of equal authority, without admitting that our investigation is, practically, hopeless; and, least of all, are we entitled to treat each as accurate, just so far as it agrees with our individual conception of what the teaching of such a person as Jesus ought to have been. Our duty is to enquire into the relative authority of these two versions of the Gospel narrative, and to assign reasons, deduced from such enquiry, for admitting or rejecting either version, in whole or in part.

Upon the ordinary view, with regard to the authorship of these Gospels, there can be little doubt of the conclusion at which we ought to arrive. If the first Gospel was written in Judæa, before the fall of Jerusalem, by Matthew, one of the Apostles, a companion of Jesus in his lifetime,—and the third by Luke, a late convert, who had never, so far as appears, been associated with the Christian Church until the time when he attached himself to the fortunes of Paul and shared his journeys, and who was not present at any of the scenes he describes,¹ —the former must surely be the more reliable. There can be no comparison between the credit due to one who was himself an eye and ear witness, who continued to live in the very centre of Christian tradition until his work was written, and one who, not having joined the sect until some twenty years after the death of its founder, visited Jerusalem a few years later, and remained there only during the brief and troubled visit which ended in the imprisonment of Paul, whom he afterwards accompanied to Rome, where it would appear that he remained, presumably, until the third Gospel was written. Whatever deductions may be made from the former, it must, unless we assume wilful dishonesty on the part of the writer, be entitled to greater credit than the latter.

Sometimes, however, a theory is suggested which implies that the account in each of these Gospels is to be received, only subject to certain deductions. It is said that the first was written for the use of Jewish believers, and that the author for this reason omitted from his version many things that might have wounded their susceptibilities, and coloured others; while the third was written for Gentile converts, and, consequently, the author made a different selection, and gave an opposite

¹ This necessarily results from the argument by which it is attempted to prove that this Gospel and the Acts were composed by Luke, or, at any rate, by a companion of Paul. It is argued that the use of the word “we” in certain parts of the Acts, necessarily implies that the author was present at the scenes there related. But, then, it results, with at least equal certainty, that he was not present at any of the other scenes he describes.

colour to his narrative. But this suggestion fails to account for the most striking discrepancies between the two accounts. And, if it were admitted, it would only throw a doubt upon both statements alike, since it represents the writers as actuated, not by a wish to tell the complete and simple truth, but by a desire to please their readers. There is but a brief step from suppressing a part of the truth, to inserting that which is not true; and the writer who consciously does the one lays himself open to a reasonable suspicion of having also done the other. It may, indeed, be further suggested that there was, in this case, no conscious suppression;—that the writers were simple men who related only what they believed to be true, and who, if they omitted incidents, or altered discourses, did so merely because the incidents appeared to them inconsistent with the character of Jesus, and therefore untrue, and the discourses to be inaccurately reported. And this is, no doubt, possible in the case of any but an actual witness; though it is not easy to imagine any one gravely attributing this kind of simplicity to the author of the third Gospel. Even if admitted, it would only save the credit of the writers for honesty of purpose, without giving any greater degree of credibility to their narratives. And it would still leave them open to the suspicion of having invented occurrences, or discourses, under the influence of the same feelings.

It must be obvious that this, in any of its forms, is a hypothesis that would be framed only for the purpose of saving the credit of the later Gospel. If it be true that the first was written by Matthew, for the use of the Church in Jerusalem, of which the Apostles formed a part, while James, the brother of Jesus, was at its head,—we have all the security which the nature of the case admits of, that it truly represents the spirit of the teaching of Jesus, and the outline of his history. We may suspect and allow for that spirit of exaggeration so generally manifested, when, during a long course of years, the memory of events is trusted to individual recollection, or to popular tra-

dition, and details of them are repeated from mouth to mouth ; but, allowing for this, we should believe that we had the truest picture of the historical Jesus that it is possible for us now to possess. And, certainly, the third Gospel, written by a recent convert in a distant land, and, probably, at a much later period, after the death of most, if not of all, of the Apostles, could not compete with it in authority. Nor, excepting for dogmatical purposes, would any one claim for it such equality. It would be at once conceded that it was an attempt so to modify the original representation of the teaching and life of Jesus as to render it adapted to the new circle into which his doctrines had penetrated, and the new disciples who had been attracted by them. We might admit the possibility that its author had found some scattered fragments of a true tradition which had not been seized by his predecessor, but we should at once conclude that, when the two were in conflict, the earlier possessed superior claims to authority.

We are not, it is true, able to assume this position. We cannot conclude that the first Gospel, as we possess it, is the work of Matthew. On the contrary, there is much in it which is inconsistent with such a conclusion. It does, however, appear to be based upon a writing composed before the fall of Jerusalem, and current among the brethren in Judæa, which, to a considerable extent, it truly represents ; and it is (among others) with the portions that have this appearance that the third Gospel conflicts. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to abandon all hope of historical certainty, by placing upon the same level a writing composed within about thirty years of the death of Jesus,—if not by one who had himself been his companion, yet by one who habitually associated with those who were,—and a writing composed from thirty to forty years later, by one who makes no claim to anything but careful and impartial research,¹ and who never belonged to the circle of those

¹ Our subsequent examination of the Acts of the Apostles will shew abundant grounds for supposing that even this claim is unfounded, and that the work was

that knew Jesus in his lifetime, we are compelled to acknowledge the greater authority of the former.

A careful examination of the contents of the third Gospel, in itself, and in comparison with the first, appears to conduct to the same conclusion. It has never been argued that the order of events in the former is, throughout, reliable—though a very few commentators have been disposed, on the whole, to give the preference, even in this respect, to the third over the first. But the opening scene at Nazareth (Luke iv., 16), pre-supposing as it does a previous working of miracles at Capernaum, which, nevertheless, the narrative almost expressly excludes, can scarcely be regarded as historical. The conduct attributed to Jesus is inconsistent and unworthy, and, in fact, inexplicable upon any reasonable hypothesis. He begins by reading from the Scriptures, and follows his reading by a brief exhortation. The audience, apparently, listen with a pleased surprise—pleased with his teaching, and surprised that such powers should be displayed by the son of the carpenter. There is not a hint of contempt or incredulity—scarcely even of an audible expression of wonder. Jesus, as it would appear, for no other reason than that, in their thoughts, they contrasted his lowly birth and station with the hopes which he held out, breaks out into reproaches; assumes that they will require him to perform before them the works already performed at Capernaum (when there is no ground for supposing he had yet performed any); threatens, by implication, that he will go to the heathen (for this is the only meaning to be put upon the examples of the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian); and when, by these reproaches and threats, he has roused them to such a pitch of anger that they menace his life, escapes from their hands, apparently, by miracle, and goes to another city in his own country, where he begins to perform miracles of

composed for the purpose of giving such an aspect to the condition of the early Church as coincided with the objects of the writer, without regard to historical probability, or authentic sources of information.

healing, and never leaves that country to perform miracles elsewhere. It is not easy to understand the object of the writer in inserting such a description, unless it be to shadow forth, at the very commencement of the life of Jesus, the rejection of the Jews and the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. And even this, although, no doubt, the natural inference from the words of Jesus, does not appear on the surface of the history, for his acts rather seem to point to a contrast between Nazareth, the city in which he had been brought up, and Capernaum and the other parts of Galilee where he had not before resided. Whatever might be the motive, it is obvious that here, at any rate, the order of events in the first Gospel is more probable and better entitled to credit.

The description, too, given in the third Gospel, of the relations of Jesus with the Pharisees, suggests a similar conclusion. In the first Gospel the Pharisees are represented at first as standing aloof and indifferent; to have paid no attention to the new teacher, who, sprung from the ranks of the people, was preaching the coming of the Kingdom to men of his own class, and forming a small knot of disciples from among them. Even the contemptuous tone in which, in the Sermon on the Mount, he is represented as having spoken of themselves, seems at first to have been disregarded, though, probably, it was not unfelt. Afterwards, as the movement acquired greater importance, and could not be altogether disregarded, the Pharisees are made to appear upon the scene, assuming an attitude of opposition which becomes more decided as the work of Jesus continues. The earliest hint, in the first Gospel, of any dissatisfaction with the teaching of Jesus occurs in the account of the miraculous cure of the man sick of the palsy, where Jesus is represented as declaring that his sins are forgiven, and some Scribes, who are present, as resenting this as an assumption of the special prerogative of God. This event, however, is related as occurring after the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount, which appears to be intended as a summary

of the whole doctrine of Jesus at this time, and after a long course of miracles. At a later period, the Pharisees are, for the first time, referred to, as attributing the power of Jesus to cast out devils to the aid of the prince of the devils ; and from this time they never meet except as avowed opponents. In the third Gospel the order of events is different, but there, also, the relation between Jesus and the body of Pharisees is described as uniformly hostile. In spite of this, Jesus is represented as, on three occasions, partaking of the hospitality of a Pharisee, and on each occasion availing himself of the opportunity to attack his entertainer or the body to which he belongs. It is not very probable, considering the feelings of hostility existing between Jesus and the Pharisees, which appears from the third Gospel to have broken out whenever they were brought into contact, that either a Pharisee would have invited Jesus to his house, or that Jesus would have accepted the invitation. And it is still more improbable that, if Jesus had voluntarily placed himself in the position of a guest, he should have so utterly disregarded the obligations which that position imposed. That he should have denounced the Pharisees to the people, whom they were leading astray ; that he should have confronted them in places of public resort, and have there exposed their formalism and insincerity, was, from his stand-point, no more than was demanded from him as a preacher of righteousness ; for, in that character, it was incumbent upon him, not merely to teach that which was good, but to condemn that which was evil. But this very position of open and avowed hostility would have made him careful not to exhibit to the people such an example of inconsistency as would have been furnished by his partaking of the hospitality of the very men whom he had denounced ; and sitting as a guest at the table of those who had called him a blasphemer and a servant of Beelzebub. And if it should be suggested that the Pharisees, whose invitations he accepted, were favourably distinguished from the rest of the body, and were not

implicated in the general hostility, this suggestion, while mitigating one source of difficulty, only leaves the alleged conduct of Jesus, as a guest, more inexplicable, and, it must be acknowledged, more indefensible.

These considerations would not, it may be admitted, justify us in rejecting the contemporary narrative of an eye-witness. Perhaps they would not, of themselves, authorize us to disbelieve the account given in the third Gospel; though they would certainly cast considerable doubt upon its accuracy, having regard to the distance of time and place from the reported occurrences at which it was written. When, however, the question is between the first Gospel and the third, these considerations appear to be decisive against the latter. When, for instance, we have to determine whether the anointing of Jesus took place at the house of Simon, the leper, presumably a well-known person in the early Christian community, as stated in the first Gospel, or at the house of a Pharisee bearing the same name, as stated in the third; or whether the denunciations of the Pharisees (Matt. xxiii., 13, *et seq.*; Luke xi., 37, *et seq.*) took place in Jerusalem in the presence of the people, shortly before the arrest of Jesus, and after repeated attacks by the Pharisees, or, at a very early period in his public life, at the house of a Pharisee whose guest he was at the time,—such improbabilities as those to which we have adverted appear decisively to shew that the earlier account is to be preferred. In fact, these scenes in the third Gospel could only have been written at a time when all perception of the true relation between Jesus and the Pharisees had been lost.

We must not, indeed, pass over the possible suggestion that both Gospels are right in what they have related, and only err, if error it can be called, by omission. It must, then, be supposed that the feet of Jesus were anointed at a feast at the house of a Pharisee by a woman who was a notorious sinner; that afterwards, at the house of Simon the leper, his head was anointed by another woman; that Jesus denounced the Pharisees at the

table of a host who was himself a Pharisee, and afterwards, at Jerusalem, repeated the same denunciations publicly in the presence of the people. But this suggestion raises numerous other difficulties that appear to be insurmountable. Take, first, the instance of the anointing. It will be necessary, in the first place, to account for the circumstance that the first Gospel contains no reference to the scene described in the third, any more than the third to that described in the first. And this is only possible, if both scenes occurred, on the hypothesis that each writer intentionally suppressed the incident which the other had related; for it cannot be supposed that either writer was ignorant of both events. That the writer of the third Gospel should be ignorant of the anointing at Bethany is incredible, considering the notoriety of the transaction implied in the words attributed to Jesus: "wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." And equally incredible is it that an incident so striking, and one which so materially affects the view to be taken of the character and doctrine of Jesus, as that of anointing his feet by a woman who was a sinner, and the declaration of Jesus that her sins, which were many, were forgiven her, for she loved much, should have been unknown to the author of the first Gospel. In this case, then, how is the omission to be accounted for? Will it be said that, in the face of the words of Jesus referred to above, the author of the third Gospel deliberately omitted all reference to the act which he so highly commended—thus, as far as his history was received as authentic, falsifying the promise? And if this be so, on what ground is it proposed to account for the omission, since there are no dogmatic prepossessions that can be alleged as a reason? Or can it be maintained that the author of the first Gospel omitted all notice of the anointing the feet of Jesus, though presumably present on the occasion, because it contradicted the representation that he desired to give of the doctrine of Jesus. This, no doubt, may be said. Those who say it, however, not

merely deprive themselves of all right to ask us to trust an author guilty of such a suppression, but they make an accusation which nothing in the tone or character of the first Gospel warrants us in entertaining. And, besides, this suggestion leaves unaccounted for the omission of the same incident from the second Gospel, the author of which certainly had no such prepossession as would have led him to suppress it, and who, no doubt, would have related it if he had heard of its occurrence.¹ We can, therefore, only conclude that the first and the third Evangelist really refer to the same event, and, in that case, we must assume that it had either been modified by tradition before it reached the latter, or, as is more probable, that he himself modified it for doctrinal purposes.

With regard to the discourse against the Pharisees, we should have to suppose either that Jesus, on two occasions, repeated the same denunciations substantially in the same words, and that each of the first and third Evangelists has omitted one of these, or that he thus spoke only once, and that one or the other of them has mistaken the occasion. The latter, upon all accounts, is more probable ; and then everything leads to the belief that the first Gospel has preserved the true tradition. That Jesus, when confronted in Jerusalem with the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law—witnessing their formalism and narrowmindedness—exasperated by their open attacks, and still more by their attempts to entrap him—feeling that all hopes of friendship, or even forbearance, on their part were vain, and that nothing was left to him but to accept and defy their hostility,—should have denounced them to the people, is consistent with his character and position. But that he should have accepted an invitation from one of their body, should have neglected to wash his hands

¹ The suggestion of Dean Alford, in his New Testament for English Readers (Introduction, chap. i., sect. 3, note), that Luke did not know of the anointing related by the first two Evangelists, only increases the difficulty, since we must, in that case, suppose that in all the places visited by him for the purpose of collecting the materials for his history, although the Gospel was preached there, “that which this woman had done” was not “also told for a memorial of her.”

before sitting down to the repast (a custom not only regarded as ceremonially necessary, but, in that climate, essential to cleanliness and comfort, one the observance of which would be due to the known feelings of his entertainer); and, then, because his host showed, by some look or gesture, his surprise at the omission, should break out into unmeasured invectives against him, and the whole body to which he belonged, is neither natural nor probable—neither consistent with the spirit of the teaching of Jesus, nor with the idea which we must form of his character.

There is only one other point to which it seems needful to refer in illustration of the reasons that induce us to give credit to the first Gospel rather than to the third, in the particulars in which they differ; and that is the framework, so to speak, in which the author of the third Gospel has set the greater number of detached sayings which he attributes to Jesus,—the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem by way of Samaria. At the fifty-first verse of the ninth chapter we learn that Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. He then sends messengers, who enter into a village of the Samaritans to prepare for him, and being refused shelter there, he goes with his disciples to another village; and in the eighteenth chapter, at the thirty-fifth verse, he is represented as approaching Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. All the incidents and discourses, consequently, related by the third Evangelist in these nine chapters are represented as taking place in the brief period occupied by such a journey. In this portion are matters peculiar to the third Gospel; but the greater part consists of matter common to the third with one or other of the former Gospels; which, so far as contained in the first, appear in a different, and, with one or two exceptions,¹ in a far more

¹ One of these exceptions is the celebrated saying (Luke ix., 57, 58; Matt. viii., 19, 20), “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head.” Such a speech on the part of Jesus is consistent with the eulogiums on poverty, as such, attributed to him in the third Gospel, but it does not agree with the tenor of the first, in which there are no indications of privation, at any rate at this period of his public life. May we not here have one of the interpolations spoken of above? It will be seen that the verses, Matt. viii., 18, 23,

suitable connection. And the more closely these chapters are examined, the more clearly will it be seen that the incidents related are unsuited to the time, and place, and circumstances with which they are connected. It may not be altogether impossible that the events occurred, but the improbability that they did is so great as to authorize us unhesitatingly to reject all claim on the part of the narrative to control or vary the accounts previously given.

If, however, this is the conclusion forced upon us,—if, in the cases in which we are able to compare the first and the third Gospels, we are driven to the conclusion that the latter is less trustworthy—that the alterations which it introduces are either due to the dogmatic views of the author, or are the result of a distorted tradition,—what security can we have for relying on it in those cases in which it introduces altogether new matter, when an incident, a parable, a prophecy, or a doctrine rests upon its unsupported authority? This is a question which we cannot evade, whose importance will be manifest by a brief enumeration of those parts of the third Gospel peculiar to itself, and of the more important features of the first Gospel which in it are entirely omitted. And it must be remembered that, even if the result of the enquiry we have pursued should be regarded by any one as favourable to the authenticity of the third Gospel, as contrasted with the first, such a question as we have just suggested must still be raised. In that event, however, it will be the authority of the first and not of the third Gospel that will be involved in the answer. If the third Gospel truly represents the spirit of the teaching of Jesus, what degree of credit can be given to the first, in which that teaching is so profoundly modified?

are naturally connected, “Jesus, seeing a great crowd of people, commanded his disciples to pass to the other side, and he entered the ship accompanied by his disciples.” And the same incident is related in the second and third Gospels (Mark iv., 35, 36; Luke viii. 22), without any hint that such an interruption occurred as that which the first Gospel now contains. The latter omission by itself would have little weight, but it is not easy to understand why the second Evangelist should have omitted this incident, if it had been contained in the source from which he drew.

The more important portions of the third Gospel, peculiar to itself, are : as to the terms of forgiveness of sin, the anointing of the feet of Jesus by the woman who was a sinner, and especially the sentence, for the sake of which the incident seems to have been inserted, “Her sins which are many are forgiven her, for she loved much ;” the parable of the prodigal son, that of the Pharisee and the publican, and the story of the penitent thief ; as to the feeling of Jesus towards the Samaritans, the journey through Samaria, the parable of the good Samaritan, the cure of the ten lepers,—one of whom was a Samaritan, and alone returned to give thanks to his benefactor ; as to poverty and wealth, the blessing on the poor and the hungry as such, the woe denounced upon those who have their good things in this life, the parable of the rich man whose ground brought forth abundantly, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ; as to the relation of the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Gentiles, the mission of the seventy disciples, corresponding to the supposed number of the nations of the earth ; as to prayer, the parable of the importunate neighbour and of the unjust judge ; and the parable of the unjust steward, for which it is difficult to suggest a purpose or a moral. And, corresponding to these, are certain omissions. The third Gospel does not contain the emphatic declaration by Jesus that he is not come to destroy, but to fulfil the law ; nor the statement that those who break or who sanction the breach of its least commandments shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven ; nor that only those whose righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;¹ nor the words,

¹ It contains the intermediate passage of the first Gospel : “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail ;” but that is inserted between two other passages—the former of which, “The law and the prophets endured until John,” &c., appears to imply the actual abrogation of the law ; and the latter, “whosoever putteth away his wife,” &c., contains a formal contradiction of a part of the Mosaic law. It is inconceivable that Jesus should have made the declaration in question in this immediate juxtaposition with two other sayings, which by implication contradict it ; and it is not easy to understand the object of the author in thus bringing them together. If this were a solitary instance, one would be tempted to see in

"whoso looketh upon a woman to lust after her," &c.—nor the prohibition of long prayers;¹ nor that of oaths; nor the injunction to secrecy in almsgiving, fasting, and prayer. It omits also the story of the healing of the daughter of the woman of Syro-Phenicia; the limitation by Jesus of his own mission to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and the prohibition to the twelve to enter the cities of the Samaritans or the way of the Gentiles. The influence of the third Gospel upon the Christian dogma has, indeed, been the effect rather of what it has introduced than of what it has omitted. Prevalent views with regard to inspiration have prevented the formal rejection of anything contained in the first Gospel merely upon the ground that it did not also occur in the third; and commentators have endeavoured, not very successfully, to reconcile the two narratives in theory, while in reality they have, for the most part, quietly passed over the peculiarities of the first Gospel as unimportant, or of only temporary interest, and have dwelt in preference upon events and doctrines peculiar to the third.

The investigation we have pursued leads us to a different conclusion. So far as external testimony is concerned, the claims of the first Gospel are superior to those of the third, for it is nearer, both in time and place, to the events which it records. We are, indeed, unable to accept it as the work of an eye-witness, or even as throughout representing the traditions of the Church at Jerusalem, previous to the destruction of the city, while still governed by James. Many portions, however, appear to date from that period; and these, we may safely conclude, re-

the centre passage a note that some judaizing disciple had inserted in the margin of his copy of the Gospel as a protest against the two other passages, and that some later copyist had carried into the text. But such a solution of the difficulty appears impossible. See D'Eichthal, *Les Evangiles*, II., 230.

¹ The parables of the unjust judge and of the importunate neighbour are implicit contradictions of this prohibition, since they imply that persistency in supplication can conquer the will of God. They almost justify the sentiment I have seen quoted from Mons. Dupanloup, the present Bishop of Orleans, "Prayer equals, and even sometimes surpasses, the power of God. It triumphs over his will, his power, and even his justice."

present the teaching of Jesus as it was understood by those who heard him. The third Gospel has no such pretensions ; and even if, against probability and internal evidence, and the apparent disclaimer of the writer, we could regard it as composed at an equally early date with the first, and as following an independent tradition, that tradition would have been the one prevailing among Gentile churches, and would have been influenced by Gentile prepossessions. And the order of events, the character of the incidents described, the picture drawn of the relation of Jesus to the law, to his followers, and to his adversaries, are more consistent with themselves and with surrounding circumstances, and more probable in the first Gospel than in the third.

In the previous enquiry no argument has been founded upon the character of the lessons inculcated, whether directly or by inference, by the acts which are attributed to Jesus. It may be quite probable, previously to an examination of the evidence, that he should have pronounced an eulogium upon poverty and a denunciation upon the wealthy, and that he should have announced the forgiveness of a notorious sinner after a sole manifestation of passionate love to himself. Upon this we pronounce no opinion. But when the evidence that he did this is found only in the work of an unknown writer, who professes merely to relate at second-hand what he has gathered from others,—a work altogether without corroboration, bearing marks of having been shaped by doctrinal considerations, which contradicts an earlier and better attested account,—it would seem that we have no alternative but to reject it. The first and second Gospels, therefore, and mainly the first, will furnish the materials employed in our subsequent attempt to delineate the teaching, and to depict the life of Jesus.

Unquestionably it would be idle to expect to be able to do either the one or the other completely. Nor does it appear possible to base any theological deductions upon particular expressions or incidents. It does not, however, appear to be vain to

attempt to restore the image of Jesus as a prophet and martyr, as it may have been conceived thirty years after his death, in the memory and report of those who had known him during the brief period of his public life.

C H A P T E R V.

THE PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE essential feature of the teaching of Jesus, during that period of his public life which we have attempted to describe, underlying the whole of his doctrine and supplying the motive for obedience to his lessons, was the speedy arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. This was the good news which he himself proclaimed, and commissioned his disciples to preach ; and to this all else was accessory. The precepts which he inculcated were the conditions of entrance into that Kingdom ; the promises which he held out were of the blessings it would offer ; the penalty threatened was exclusion from its enjoyments. In judging of the real nature of his teaching, therefore, it is impossible to omit altogether the question of the character of the Kingdom which he preached, as it was understood by his hearers, if not by himself.

Our materials for this enquiry are very inadequate, and our altered position renders any conclusions which we may draw necessarily uncertain. It is easy, comparatively, to combine into one view the various notices of the Messiah and of his Kingdom contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, and from these to frame a delineation of the Kingdom of Heaven, as we fancy it would appear to one familiar with these writings, and who believed them to be divinely inspired. But between the picture we so form, and that formed from the same materials by an average Jew of the time of Jesus, there is a difference not easy to estimate. We cannot, by any effort of abnegation, divest our minds

of the ideas which the last eighteen centuries have developed, and which we inherit. Nor are we able to reproduce, completely, the ideas that have become obsolete during the same period, but which were familiar to the whole Jewish people. We have occasional glimpses of these latter in the New Testament, and in other writings of about the same period, but they are fragmentary and inadequate. Even towards the close of the second century, we see from the statement of Irenæus, quoted above,¹ how extravagant were the notions entertained as to the material abundance and the coarse physical enjoyments of the expected Kingdom, by a man so intelligent and instructed as, under some aspects, he undoubtedly was. And we have no reason to suppose that the ordinary views of those whom Jesus taught, even of his immediate followers, were less extravagant and fantastical.

It is, no doubt, true that such a report of the conversation of Jesus could not have proceeded from the author of the fourth Gospel, whose whole work pointedly excludes this class of ideas. But it does not, on that account, follow that Irenæus was mistaken in attributing the report to the Apostle John; or that Jesus might not, in fact, have used such an illustration, or one that was easily capable of taking that form. It is not safe, from the public teaching of any one, to draw absolute conclusions respecting the character of his familiar talk. The one may be of the loftiest character and the other may be tinged by the homely associations of childhood, and be on a level with the feelings and capacities of his associates in their ordinary moods. Many a statesman and philosopher, whose public utterances are uniformly sustained and elevated, will habitually, we may say inevitably, in the daily intercourse of common life, descend to a lower tone of thought and sentiment, and employ illustrations that he would deem quite unsuitable for a wider audience. And this, we may be certain, was the case also with Jesus. In the unreserved and confiding relations which existed between himself

¹ p. 75.

and his disciples, it is quite possible, therefore, that he might have employed such an illustration when speaking of the physical aspect of the coming Kingdom. It is, perhaps, quite as probable that he should have done so, as that the statement should have been falsely attributed to him.

Certainly, the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven, as understood by the Jews, included, if it was not bounded by, a condition of material ease and abundance. It was to be a period when, not only should the earth yield its produce without stint, but, literally, instead of the thorn should come up the fig tree, and instead of the briar, the myrtle; when all should be blessed with numerous offspring, and should sit in security under their own vine and fig-tree, enjoying, without the necessity of labour, the spontaneous produce of the renewed earth. And, beside this, glory and supremacy were to be restored to Israel, and a full measure of retribution was to be inflicted upon all the nations at whose hands that people had suffered. With these lower expectations were associated, in the minds of the more thoughtful or more spiritual, hopes of a fuller manifestation of the presence of Jehovah, and of a more intimate relation between himself and his people. And we may be sure that all classes expected a revival of the splendours of the ancient ritual, and the willing observance of the law, in all its requirements, by the whole of the restored people.

It is observable that in the Synoptical Gospels we have no report of anything said by Jesus to the people, during this first period of his public life, as to the nature of the Kingdom about which he preached. He appears, in this respect, to have acquiesced in the views commonly entertained, possibly he himself shared them. Possibly he was satisfied to work upon the hopes actually entertained by his audience as motives to urge them to the repentance which he required, without troubling himself to correct errors that would in so short a period be dissipated by the actual manifestation of the Kingdom itself. Indirectly his teaching would tend to raise and purify the views of his hearers

as to its character, by insisting upon the necessity of a moral amendment as a qualification for entrance into it; and by exhibiting to them a loftier standard of morality. We see, however, by the request of the wife of Zebedee on behalf of her children, preferred long subsequently, that the old ideas on the subject were not much changed, even among his immediate followers.

The Sermon on the Mount is presented to us as a summary of the early teaching of Jesus, before he had provoked the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, or had to lament the fickleness of the multitude; and we may probably accept it as substantially accurate. In so far as we do so, we must regard it as containing that which Jesus came to teach. It represents his original conclusions, the result of his own reflexions upon the true meaning of the law, and upon the character of God. His later speeches have too often a tinge of controversy, or they display some expression of disappointment and reproach. Here all is assured and calm. It is the teaching of one who is convinced that his doctrine is not only true but sufficient, and who doubts not that it will commend itself to the consciences of all to whom it is addressed.

As has been recently pointed out, it is difficult to regard this discourse as anything but a collection and condensation of many separate discourses, in which the same ideas were repeated with the same or with varied illustrations. Upon a mixed multitude, casually collected, who heard it for the first time, and once only, it would leave no distinct or permanent impression. But of all that pertains to the history of Jesus there is nothing that appears to be less coloured by the later ideas of the disciples, or by the controversies in which they were engaged, than the greater portion of this sermon. It is true that here and there a passage may be pointed out which is at variance with the general spirit, or inconsistent with the position of Jesus at the time, and which we may, therefore, regard as having been interpolated in the

record, or added to the report while it still rested in tradition. But these scarcely affect its general character. Here, therefore, if anywhere, we may learn what Jesus taught as the essential qualification for the enjoyment of the kingdom—what he thought concerning the nature of God, and what of the duty of man.

The essential features of this discourse may be described as an attempt to spiritualize the Mosaic law, and to elevate the gentler virtues. The poor in spirit—the mourners—the meek—they who hunger and thirst for justice—the merciful—the peacemakers—the pure in heart—they who suffer because they do rightly—such are the blessed of the kingdom; those who may rightly be called blessed, because to them the Kingdom of Heaven shall be opened. It is scarcely necessary to point out that, in this enumeration of virtues, there is no reference to orthodoxy of creed, or correctness of ceremony—none to the merits which the Jewish Phariseeism of that day, or Christian Phariseeism since, has singled out for special encouragement. The assumption of superiority, founded either upon a conscious possession of true views of the nature of God, or of the scheme of salvation, or upon a correct performance of all that the Church requires, obtains no recognition here. It is not those that are zealous for the truth, and eager to crush every form of error, but the peacemakers—not the sound in doctrine, but the pure in heart—not the combatants for a creed, but they who hunger and thirst to do what is right, whom Jesus selects for blessing. The others may have their usefulness, and may find their appropriate position in the Church; but Jesus, at least, allots them no place in the kingdom that he announces. Not even is Esau's blessing reserved for them. They are passed over altogether, as though, contrary to the teaching of every church claiming to be orthodox, correctness of dogma, and zeal for its maintenance and propagation, were absolutely insignificant as compared with humility, purity, peacefulness, and love. And this conclusion is confirmed by other portions of the discourse. The tree is to be known by its fruits—a corrupt tree cannot bring forth

good fruits ; and, therefore, whoever manifests in his life the spirit of the precepts which Jesus inculcates, is by that sign alone known to be good. And, further, it is not he who believeth in the person and work of Jesus, but he who heareth these sayings and doeth them, that is likened to a man that is safe, because he has founded himself upon the rock of fact and practice ; while he that heareth these sayings and doeth them not, though accurate in belief, and unimpeachable in ceremony, is to be likened to a man who is not safe, because he has built upon the sandy foundation of mere belief and approval.

The more positive aspects of the doctrine of Jesus follow these blessings addressed to certain characters. At the commencement, stand the well-known phrases, "Ye are the salt of the earth," "Ye are the light of the world," which have since been applied with so much complacency by Christian commentators either to the whole visible body of Christians, or to that narrower circle which they recognize as comprising the true Church. It seems clear, however, that these words were originally addressed to the audience in their character of Jews. At this time Jesus was in the first flush of success, and surrounded by crowds drawn from various places, all eager to listen to the good news which he proclaimed. There is nothing in the narrative to suggest that apart from, and in the midst of these, there was any select body, distinguished from the rest, to whom his teaching was confined. He had, indeed, called four of the apostles, but it would be difficult to suppose that lessons of such universal application should be addressed exclusively to them ; and it would have been scarcely consistent with the spirit of humility enjoined to have assigned to them such a position at the time. Nor was there any intelligible sense in which this language could be applied to persons, whether apostles or others, who had only a few days before attached themselves to Jesus, while there was an obvious and, even from the modern orthodox point of view, a true sense in which they might be applied to the Jews, who, alone among the nations,

preserved the knowledge and the worship of Jehovah, the one true God.

And this is the impression produced by the account in the Gospel. It is here, no doubt, that there is a seeming contrast drawn between "the multitude," whose presence induced Jesus to go up into the mountain, and the disciples who there came to him. The last verse of chapter vii., however, shews that it was the former who heard him, and to whom his lessons were addressed, for "the multitude¹ were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority." And this conclusion is confirmed by the distinctions drawn and the illustrations employed throughout the discourse, which are uniformly applicable to the hearers in their character of Jews, and not in the narrower character of disciples of Jesus.²

To the audience, then, as Jews, was the announcement of the privilege, the duty, and the danger. They, as Jews, through and for whom was the manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven, were the "salt of the earth" the "light of the world,"—upon whom, not for their own sake merely, but for that of the nations also, was cast the duty of preserving their savour and of shewing forth their radiance. And they incurred the risk individually, at least, if not as a nation, of being cast aside as worthless if they failed in the performance of this duty. And with this concurs the declaration that follows, of the perpetuity of the law, and of the relation which the mission of Jesus bore to it,—that he had not come to destroy, but to fulfil.³ The law was addressed to the Jews, and was binding only upon them. It was the visible seal of the covenant between Jehovah and

¹ *οἱ ὄχλοι*, the same word as that employed in chap. v. 1.

² "Use not vain repetitions as the Gentiles;" "Do not even the publicans so?" "Be not as the hypocrites," etc.

³ It has been suggested that this passage was only attributed to Jesus in view of the Pauline controversy. But it must be remembered that Jesus was preaching a new version of the law, and was, apparently, sanctioning lax practices. It was, therefore, necessary to reassure his hearers with regard to his views as to the obligations of the law, and to prevent them from making his example an excuse for lawlessness.

themselves, as his people. To proclaim the permanence of the law, and its continued obligation in the new Kingdom was, therefore, to declare that the heirs of the Kingdom were to be the Jews. Not merely were they the preserving and illuminating principle in the existing order of things, but their enjoyment of the same position in the future was secured to them by the promised continuance of their law.

Having thus reminded his hearers of their pre-eminence, and assured them of the durability of the foundation upon which that pre-eminence reposed, Jesus proceeds to expound the true character of the law itself. It is not merely the outward act that is forbidden, but even more, the disposition and feelings of which the outward act is the expression. The law forbids to kill; but the principle of the prohibition applies equally to reproachful language, or to needless or unjust anger.¹ The law forbids adultery; but to look upon a woman with a deliberate desire and purpose of committing the offence is, itself, sinful,—an adultery of the heart. The law allows to the husband a power of divorce; but whoever exercises that power capriciously occasions adultery. The law forbids perjury; but every needless oath is, of itself, an offence. The law allows of retaliation; but the spirit of the law, and the filial relation it recognizes between God and man, require forbearance, forgiveness, submission to injury, and even love towards enemies and wrong-doers,—for thus do men best show that they are the children of him who showers the bounties of his Providence alike upon the good and the evil—the just and the unjust. Prayer, and fasting, and almsgiving are required; but the

¹ The translation in the authorized version gives altogether a false colour to the teaching of Jesus in this respect, so far as regards the punishment attached to the words he forbids. This will be evident from a brief consideration of the climax:—Angry—Raca—thou fool; Judgment—Council—Hell-fire. Obviously, there is no proportion between them, and while the two former imply merely temporal and civil punishments, the last, for a slightly aggravated offence, threatens a literally infinite aggravation of penalty. The words of Jesus are “the gehenna of fire,” referring to the custom of ordering the bodies of certain criminals, after execution, to be burned in the Valley of Hinnom, of which “gehenna” is the translation. The same remark applies to the other instances in which “gehenna” is translated “Hell.”—Dewes “Plea for a New Translation of the Scriptures.”

prayer is to be that of a suppliant trusting in the knowledge, and wisdom, and love of the Being whom he addresses, and knowing that He neither needs to be instructed by our supplications, nor is capable of being influenced by our importunity.¹ And all these acts are to be performed from a feeling of need or of duty, and not with a view to applause ; and so performed as that men may not even be aware of the act, lest human should take the place of divine approbation, and the favour of God be lost because the praise of man has been obtained. There is, moreover, to be a spirit of child-like dependance upon God and trust in his love, and men are to approach him as a son would his father, assured that a request will be granted, if for the good of the applicant. And this trust in God, as a loving and provident father, is to exclude all such anxiety for the future as leads to the accumulation of earthly treasure. Such cares may be suitable enough for the Gentiles, who know not God ; but, for those who have this knowledge, any undue trouble implies a distrust of his love or of his power. He feeds the fowls of the air ; he clothes the lilies of the field ; and shall he not much more feed and clothe those whom he has acknowledged to be his children ? We are to judge charitably of the conduct of others, remembering that our own frailty exposes us also to harsh judgments ; and that even in respect of the very offences which we feel impelled to condemn, we may ourselves be liable to a severer censure. And, besides and above these motives, such charity is demanded by the law of love, which requires that we should do to others whatever, in similar circumstances, we should desire them to do to us. And whoever obeys these precepts from the heart, may securely rest his hope upon such obedience in the midst of the storms and trials of time, and in the hour of the greatest extremity, for he has founded himself upon a rock.

¹ There are other passages apparently, perhaps really, inconsistent with this view, but the present object is to ascertain what was the teaching of Jesus in this sermon ; not how that teaching may be harmonized with other sayings, or what conclusions may be drawn from a comparison of the whole.

Such is, in substance, the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the teaching of a Jew, addressing Jews; founded upon the Mosaic law, and recognizing its authority; but shewing that something higher and more spiritual is required than a mere literal fulfilment of its commands. How far it was original, or whether it was in any degree derived from the prior teaching of John, we have no means of judging. If even we were entitled to regard the precepts attributed to John, in the third Gospel, as having been really uttered by him, we should still have no right to conclude that this was all which he taught, or that his teaching did not rise, at least, to the level of the old prophets, with whose writings he must have been familiar, in requiring the obedience of the heart, and in estimating justice, mercy, and faith, above ceremonial observances or outward act. It may seem idle to state a question which we have no means whatever of answering. At least, however, it will serve the purpose of reminding us that Jesus was, originally, a disciple of John, and received his baptism; and, upon John's imprisonment, stepped into the place which he had been compelled to abandon, and preached the same doctrine in the same language. And this, at least, makes it probable that the precepts taught by Jesus, as the conditions of entrance into the Kingdom, were substantially identical with those that John had taught before.

What appears to have been really distinctive in this preaching of Jesus, was that he taught these duties simply, without requiring any preliminary profession or rite. His hearers were not required, in order to qualify themselves to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, either to confess their sins, or to repeat any creed, or to be baptized, or to separate themselves from the world. No external observance of whatever kind was prescribed. To have done this, indeed, would have contradicted the whole spirit of the lessons inculcated; for these assumed throughout that such observances are worthless. All that was needful was to obey the precepts of the law in their full inner

signification, while continuing to follow the ordinary pursuits of life, and to wait in patient hope for the manifestation of Jehovah.

This, indeed, implied, further, that the coming of the Kingdom was to be altogether supernatural, that it was to be effected by some power of sufficient efficacy, without requiring to be helped by a rising of the people. If nothing more were needed of those who were expecting its arrival than that they should prepare themselves by meekness, purity, and righteousness, this could only be because Jehovah would himself effectually perform the work. And, hence, the doctrines taught by Jesus were essentially peaceful. They were associated, indeed, with a hope that had been the fruitful source of turbulence and rebellion; but they presented this hope in a new light, and made its realization depend upon new conditions. It is doubtful if this consequence of his teaching was fully realized by his hearers. In so far as it was, it would, probably, weaken the impression produced. And even if it had not this effect at first, it would, practically, lose its influence when it was found that there was no such supernatural intervention of Jehovah as the hearers had been led to expect.

However this may be, there is nothing, probably, in the whole discourse that would not have been assented to by every pious Jew among the hearers, with as much cordiality as by a modern Christian; nay, with more. For the former would have accepted the teaching simply as it was delivered, while the latter qualifies its purport by later developments of doctrine, and empties the concluding passage, especially, of all significance. No Christian divine, at the present day, would venture to preach that such obedience, as is within the power of average men (and this was, necessarily, the meaning of Jesus), if performed from the heart, will be a sufficient foundation for hope in time and in eternity;¹ or if he did so preach, he would be scouted as

¹ Necessarily the meaning of Jesus,—that is if, we suppose him to have meant what he knew that all his hearers would understand him to mean.

an infidel. But to the Jew this doctrine would be in strict conformity with what he had learned from the law and the prophets. And, although, among the commands, there were some that, in their form, were novel, yet in their spirit they were akin to much that the old law contained. Even the most difficult,—those requiring forgiveness of injuries and love of enemies,—apart from the reasons assigned for their practice, which a Jew would admit to be valid, possessed an especial appropriateness from the circumstance, that in a brief time, when the better age commenced, the superiority of the Jewish people would be so evident that other nations would not retain the power or the will to injure them further ; but, on the contrary, all would be drawn by an irresistible attraction to supplicate for a share in their privileges.

There are some passages not included in the preceding summary of the discourse, because it appears impossible to believe that they originally belonged to it. One of these is the blessing pronounced upon those who are persecuted for the sake of Jesus. It follows the blessing pronounced on those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, of which it might be taken to be another form, but it greatly modifies its character, and introduces a strange and heterogeneous element into the group of blessings. It suggests, too, a state of things that we have no reason to suppose existed at the time. Jesus till then had done nothing but preach the good news of the kingdom, and call four of his disciples ; and he had not, so far as appears, in any way identified himself with the kingdom, excepting as its herald. To pronounce those blessed who were persecuted for his sake, would have been an assumption of personal importance inconsistent with his seeming position, for which nothing could have prepared his audience, and inconsistent also with the impersonal character of the residue of his discourse. It would have been unmeaning to his audience, for he had not called upon them to follow him. It would, besides, have been regarded as savouring of presumption that one, himself so lately a disciple of John, who had only

just assumed the office of teacher, should have placed the circumstance of being persecuted for his sake on a level with the various virtues which he had enumerated, and should raise those who endured it to the level of the prophets. Nor is it easy to understand what sense could have been attached to the words by the multitude. Persecution for doing what was right—persecution for the Kingdom—persecution for the sake of Jehovah—would have been intelligible; but persecution for the sake of Jesus would have awakened no response in the minds of his hearers.

It would seem, consequently, that such a blessing could scarcely have been uttered by Jesus at this time, any more than could another passage that we have also omitted, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,” etc.¹ (Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23). This latter saying implies, moreover, a distinct public claim to be the Messiah, which, as being made at this period of his life, is inconsistent with the whole character of the narrative. If he had thus openly asserted himself to be the Lord and Judge, whose fiat was to decide absolutely upon the admission or rejection of those who sought entrance into the Kingdom, and if he had taught his hearers that works done in his name might be urged as a proof of a right to be admitted, it is not easy to understand how this claim could have been so completely overlooked both by the multitude and by his disciples. “The multitude were astonished,” but only at his doctrine, and because he taught “as one having authority;” but surely they would have been much more astonished if the preacher of the kingdom had thus suddenly assumed to be its king, and the teacher who declared what were terms of admission had claimed to be also the Judge who was to decide whether those terms had been fulfilled. And there is nothing to shew that his disciples understood that, at that time, he put forth any such pretensions; but on the con-

¹ This is one of the passages that may probably be referred to the Pauline controversy. The author of the first Gospel never applies the epithet “Lord” to Jesus, while Paul seldom omits it.

trary, the emphatic praise pronounced upon Peter at a far later period, for recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, is inconsistent with any such previous claim to that character as is implied in the passage we are now examining.

Our conclusion, so far, may be objected to from two points of view. It may be said that, since our only authority for the belief that any such discourse was pronounced, or any such doctrines taught by Jesus, is the narrative in question, we are bound to accept it as sufficient, or to reject it in its entirety; that we have no right to exclude portions that come to us vouched by the same witness whose testimony we accept with regard to the residue. And hence, those who doubt the report, so far as these passages are concerned, will see in that doubt a reason for distrusting the whole. And, on the other hand, those who agree with us in accepting the other portions of the report, will argue that the evidence we allow to be sufficient with regard to these portions ought to be admitted as sufficient throughout; and, perhaps, there is no complete answer to be given to these objections. It is no doubt true that to assign reasons for discrediting one portion of a narrative does tend to throw a doubt over the whole, since it necessarily impeaches either the knowledge or the truthfulness of the narrator; and, if incorrect in one part, he may be so in all. And so of the opposite argument. As, however, after all, these are questions of degree; as scarcely any narrative is accepted as containing all that did, and nothing that did not occur; and as, consequently, there never can be any but probable conclusions in matters resting on evidence, while yet these conclusions are found sufficient to guide us in the affairs of life, and in historical judgments; there is nothing illogical or unreasonable in the attempt to distinguish between what is true and what is false in any given narrative. Of course, in such a case any one is at liberty to dissent from the conclusion on the ground that the reasoning is unsatisfactory, but not on the ground that the process is necessarily illusory.

We have already stated our reasons for supposing that the first Gospel contains accounts with regard to the life of Jesus which were current in the church at Jerusalem within about thirty years after his death, and were, about that time, reduced to writing. Among the members of that church were persons who had known Jesus during the whole of his public career ; at least from the time that Peter, Andrew, James, and John became his disciples. If we were sure that the Gospel, as we possess it, was substantially the same as the original writing from which we suppose it to have been in part derived, we might be able to rely upon it as generally accurate. Even in that case we might still question its correctness with regard to details ; and especially might see grounds for doubting whether particular sayings attributed to Jesus at one period of his life were spoken then or subsequently. We should remember the many causes that might confuse recollection—the propensity to exaggeration that always characterizes traditional accounts of great men ; the inclination to assume that Jesus must have said something applicable to every contingency that might arise, and the tendency to supply from the imagination any seeming gaps in the memory. But no one would have a right, on critical grounds, on the one hand to throw aside the entire narrative as worthless, when it depicts so marked and, on the whole, so consistent an individuality as that of Jesus, because it narrates incidents that are incredible, or attributes to him actions or sayings improbable or inconsistent with the general picture ; nor on the other, to insist upon the truth of every saying recorded and act related, however improbable or inconsistent, because contained in the history. The credibility or the reverse of any particular portion would have to be determined by a process of induction, in which, as the premises are necessarily in some degree uncertain, the conclusions to be formed would be affected by a like uncertainty ; though not in a greater degree than, in the nature of things, attaches to all similar investigations.

To apply this process, then, to the Sermon on the Mount. We find, throughout the greater portion, a style of teaching characterized by depth, elevation, and earnestness, which bears apparently the impress of an individual mind. It is consistent with the character of Jesus as he is portrayed in the first Gospel, and with his position as a Jew announcing to Jews the good news of the Kingdom ; and, probably, it is one of the portions that formed part of the original Gospel. There is reason, consequently, to believe that it so far represents the real character of the teaching of Jesus at this period of his life. Intermingled with this are passages that appear inconsistent with his position, and that would have been either unintelligible to his hearers, or, if understood, would have excited a degree of attention to his personal claims which the narrative, by implication, contradicts ; and, at the same time, these passages accord with the view taken of his character many years after his death. The same process of reasoning, therefore, which leads us to accept the discourse as a generally faithful representation of the earliest teaching of Jesus, disposes us to reject these passages, and to regard them as later inventions, either interpolated into the Gospel itself after it was written, or, more probably, into the tradition which the written Gospel represents.

It will be seen, however, that neither of these alleged sayings of Jesus transcend the sphere of Jewish ideas. It is only as spoken of himself, at this period of his life, and on such an occasion, that they would have surprised or repelled his hearers. If we could suppose that Jesus, at this time, had announced himself to be the Messiah, and had been accepted as such by the multitude ; or if these words had been uttered on the occasion of his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, there would have been nothing in either of the sayings that his hearers might not have understood and approved. As Messiah, those who believed in him and were persecuted for his sake might well be regarded as blessed, for they were certain to be acknowledged by him ; and he would be allowed to have the power of re-

ceiving or rejecting the candidates for admission into his Kingdom. But upon the next occasion on which he is represented as addressing the surrounding multitude, the entire aspect of his teaching is changed. Those to whom he spoke were, apparently, the same as those who had listened to his discourse on the mountain, and been induced to follow him. They are further described as having witnessed the miracle of healing upon a leper, and as having heard the command of Jesus to the man whom he had healed, to go and do all that the law required. Soon after, his tone and attitude, in this respect, are altered. Instead of continuing to preach the good news of the Kingdom to the Jews, he announces in language impossible to be mistaken that the Gentiles should be admitted to the Kingdom from which the others were to be cast out. The occasion, too, for the manifestation of this change is as singular as the change itself is unaccountable. A certain Gentile centurion comes to Jesus, beseeching him that he will heal his servant, addressing him by the title of "Lord," and manifesting an excess of humility, strangely contrasting with their respective positions;—on the one side a commander of the Roman troops, and on the other an artisan, who had only recently assumed the office of a preacher.¹ Jesus, in consideration of this, not only heals the servant by a mere act of volition, but declares to the bystanders that he has "not seen so great faith, no not in Israel;" and he then proceeds to pronounce the sentence of exclusion from the Kingdom to which we have referred.

If we are to regard the account as true, our only conclusion, however painful and seemingly irreverent it might appear, would be that Jesus was so flattered by the homage thus paid him by a foreigner of rank and influence, as to become forgetful or ungrateful towards his disciples. Surely those who at

¹ The Jews were regarded by the Roman legionaries in much the same manner as the Hindoos are regarded by the English troops quartered among them. The improbability of the account may, therefore, be judged of by supposing the parties to be an Indian Fakir, and the colonel of an English regiment of cavalry.

his call had abandoned their home and occupation had shewn, practically, a greater faith than that which the centurion displayed. They had trusted themselves and their fortunes to his guidance ; had “left all and followed him.” And even this assumption accounts only for one half of the speech. It might have induced Jesus to recognize and declare the fact that the Gentiles should be admitted, but it could supply no motive to proclaim that the Jews should be cast out from the Kingdom. Assuming that this signal display of faith had impressed upon him the conviction that believing Gentiles, of whom this centurion was the type, should sit down in the Kingdom of Heaven with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and that he considered the occasion suitable for the enforcement of this truth, why should the Jews—the children of the Kingdom—be excluded ; and what was there in the circumstances to induce him to warn them of their exclusion ? And even if this question could be satisfactorily answered, there would be the further difficulty,—that this pointed approval of a Gentile, and sentence of reprobation passed upon the Jews, provoked no hostility, and even, apparently, failed to excite any attention.

Whoever will fairly weigh these improbabilities—that a Roman officer, quartered in Galilee, should have addressed Jesus in the manner described ; that Jesus should have declared this man’s faith to be superior to that of the most eminent of the Apostles, who had already given up all for him ; that he should have taken this opportunity of proclaiming to the Jews that they should be cast out from the Kingdom of Heaven ;—and that all this should produce no manifestation of anger, or even of astonishment, will assuredly feel that there is great reason to suspect the accuracy of the narrative. And if he further considers the inconsistency between the conduct here attributed to Jesus towards this Gentile, who was a man in authority, and that subsequently pursued in the case of the humble Syro-Phenician woman, whose prayer for help he, in the first instance, rejects, on the ground that he is only sent to the lost

sheep of the house of Israel ; and the still greater inconsistency between the prediction of the casting out of the Jews, and his own conduct in immediately afterwards preaching the good news of the Kingdom in all the cities and villages of the district, and in sending his Apostles to preach exclusively to Israelites ; and that this incident, shocking, as it must, all the most cherished feelings of his nation, appears in its most anti-judaical form in that which is recognized as in tone and sentiment the most Jewish of all the Gospels, he can scarcely avoid the conclusion that the whole incident is a later interpolation. And this inference cannot but be strengthened by the fact that the event is not related in the second Gospel, where it would unquestionably have had a place if the writer had been aware of its existence.

And if it should be said, as perhaps it may, that the seeming inconsistencies in the conduct and speeches of Jesus are capable of being reconciled in some higher sphere of thought, or that they are only the apparent or real contradictions into which men will be betrayed when they have to apply extreme principles to the various circumstances in which they are placed ; at least we have a right to say that such a story could not have obtained currency in the Church of Jerusalem, or have been inserted in a Gospel composed for the use of Jewish disciples. Those who opposed Paul because he opened the door of the Church to Gentiles, as such, as well as to Jews, could not have believed or have accepted a statement that Jesus himself, on so memorable an occasion, had predicted, not their common enjoyment of the glories of the Kingdom, but that those glories should be exclusively, or principally, the lot of the Gentiles.

If, then, we reject this incident as intrinsically improbable, and as not belonging to the earliest tradition, the teaching and conduct of Jesus are consistent and homogeneous ; appropriate to his assumed character and actual position. If, however, a respect for the authority of the first Gospel as

it stands, leads any one to regard the account as true, it is impossible to form any harmonious conception of the doctrine which Jesus taught, and it would be very difficult to acquit him of something like duplicity or temporizing. On that assumption the only conclusion would appear to be that the declaration on the Mount as to the permanence of the law was intended for the multitude; and was made in order to prevent them from being repelled from a teacher whose real mission was to put an end to the existing order of things—to abrogate the law, and to destroy the privileges of the children of Israel; while the speech made in the presence of the centurion was addressed to a narrower circle, who were aware of his ultimate purpose. It is difficult to say whether such a conclusion would do most violence to the text or to our idea of Jesus. At any rate we should rather believe that tradition was mistaken, or that a passage had been interpolated, than that Jesus had been guilty of duplicity.¹

Up to this time there is no hint in the first Gospel of any opposition provoked by the teaching of Jesus. He preaches "the Kingdom," and proclaims his doctrine to enthusiastic and assenting audiences. Neither Scribes nor Pharisees have yet appeared upon the scene to question his orthodoxy, to deny his mission, or to attribute his power of exorcism to Beelzebub. But this state of tranquillity could not in the nature of things be of long continuance. A teacher who gathered multitudes around him,

¹ It will be seen that we do not reject the incident on the ground of its imputing unworthy conduct to Jesus, but upon grounds altogether independent of this; and only refer to it as an answer to those who insist, at all hazards, upon vindicating the integrity and accuracy of the text. A hundred subtle arguments may be invented to show the possibility of reconciling the two sayings, but to admit any of these would be to convict Jesus of intentional deception. What he must be taken to have meant was what he supposed his hearers to have understood him to mean; and certainly he could not have supposed that any of those subtleties were present to their minds.

to whom he taught the insufficiency of the rules of conduct prescribed by their recognised instructors, and held out these latter as examples of defective righteousness, must necessarily provoke the hostility of those whose maxims and whose conduct he impugned. And indications of this begin shortly to appear ; just in proportion as we may imagine that the original enthusiasm of his followers was abated by the delay in the fulfilment of his predictions. The points of attack selected were such as might be expected to have weight with the multitude,—not his discourses, but the manner in which he exemplified his principles in his life. And that these should have been selected, when taken in connection with the well-known sensitiveness of the people to anything that appeared to question the obligation of the law, or their own exclusive privileges, shews conclusively that there was nothing said or done by Jesus that exposed him to an attack on this ground. His enemies assailed his free and unascetic mode of life—his disregard of the traditional rules for the observance of the law—and his admitting publicans and sinners (whoever the latter might be) to his society, and even eating with them.

The first ground of objection is reported as originally taking the form of a friendly enquiry by the disciples of John, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?” It is obvious, however, from the speech attributed to Jesus on the occasion of the message from John, that this accusation, or the conduct which it attacked, had produced a deep impression ; and that, in combination with the last of the above charges, it was employed as an argument, not merely against his mission, but against his character. “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” It is clear that whether we accept the speech as historical or not, this passage could scarcely have been introduced unless accusations of this nature had been made against Jesus, to which his conduct had given a seeming colour.

Taken as a whole, the impression produced by the narrative would be that Jesus shared the repasts, and partook of the enjoyments, of his disciples and of those who were favourably disposed towards him ; that he disregarded the pharisaic precepts with regard to fasting, the mode of eating and ceremonial washings; and that he equally disregarded the ban placed upon certain individuals in cases where he saw indications of repentance and amendment. His conduct in this respect was a part of his teaching, and formed the complement to his oral instruction. As in the one he taught that purity of heart was essential, so in the other he showed that ceremonial uncleanness was immaterial ; as in the one he taught that fasting was to be unostentatious and even hidden, so in the other he showed that God might be served without fasting at all ; as in the one he said “ Judge not that ye be not judged,” so in the other he practically refused to concur in the sentence of condemnation pronounced upon a class. - The effect of the two—the doctrine and the practice—appears, however, to have been widely different. Those who listened approvingly while he taught in precept the one aspect of his principle, shrank from him with feelings akin to disgust, when in practice he exemplified the other. It was one thing to be told that they were to judge charitably, and another thing to see an example of this charitable judgment in the act of accepting the hospitality of a social pariah by the very man whom they had followed as their teacher ; one thing to learn that they were to fast in secret, and another thing to see what they considered the duty of fasting systematically disregarded ; one thing to hear that they were to regard the spirit of an act as alone essential, and another thing to see persons eating bread with unwashed hands ; one thing to listen to denunciations of pharisaic formalism, and another thing to see the new teacher of righteousness living the common life of men, sharing in their feasts, and imposing by his presence no restraint upon their enjoyments. It must always be difficult to regard as raised above the common level of virtue and holiness, a person

who is seen not merely to share in all innocent social enjoyments, but to set at nought the rules which religious men, or those who pass for such, habitually observe, and even to visit and feast with those who are degraded by a hateful occupation, or polluted by notorious sins. No doubt wisdom is justified by her children, but not in the sight of the ascetic or the ceremonialist, and scarcely in the eye of the multitude. In fact, it is only by those who are themselves her children that the true character of such conduct can be appreciated.

It is not, however, improbable that, so far as the charge of being a friend of publicans and sinners is concerned, it was in substance a misrepresentation.¹ Jesus is, no doubt, described as accepting the hospitality of one who had been a publican;² but, as already pointed out, only after he had apparently forsaken his occupation to become a disciple. To publicans, as such, while continuing to exercise the functions of their office, Jesus does not appear to have entertained any different feelings from those of the Jews in general. In the Sermon on the Mount, and, in fact, to the end of his career, he repeatedly refers to publicans, as persons from whom nothing excellent was to be expected. "Do not even the publicans so?" And the only occasion on which he is represented as being brought into social relations with them, is, apparently, that of the feast given by Matthew to signalize his relinquishment of office. No doubt, in accepting the services and companionship of one of this class, in taking him into immediate attendance upon his own person, and in sitting down at his table as a guest with others of the same class (for none else would have accepted Matthew's hospitality), Jesus must have deeply shocked the prejudices of the people. But there is a marked difference between his actual conduct in accepting a publican who was ready to repent, and to reform, and to abandon his obnoxious

¹ It would hardly be so if we were to accept the third Gospel as our authority.

² Such, at least, appears to be the purport of the story in the first Gospel. It is not, however, here quite free from ambiguity.

or unlawful calling, and who actually did this before being received into the number of his disciples, and that which appears to have been attributed to him—that of associating with them while practising their calling, and without requiring them to abandon it. The right view of the conduct of Jesus in this respect, according to the first Gospel, appears to be that he did not consider a publican, or any one, as excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven by his past occupation or conduct, if he was prepared to comply with the conditions of repentance and amendment; and that he practically manifested this feeling by receiving and associating with those in whom the appropriate signs of repentance and reformation were exhibited. But that he did not, by preference, seek such, is shewn by the list of the Apostles, and appears to result from the whole narrative.

But even this was a stretch of liberality beyond the comprehension of his contemporaries. That to sinners, not merely those who complacently confessed themselves to be such when repeating the penitential psalms, while secretly or avowedly priding themselves upon their complete and even superfluous righteousness, but to the coarse, actual, open violators of the law—the hated instruments of Roman tyranny—extortioners, unjust—“these publicans;”—that to these the Kingdom of Heaven and the society of good men should be opened on the same terms as to others;—that all, even the best, needed to repent and to amend, and that none, even the worst, needed to do more, would appear, to orthodox Jews, to sap the very foundations of morality. It was true that, for this also, there was warrant in their sacred writings. That God would forgive upon repentance; that the just man, falling into sin, would not be saved by his former righteousness; and that the wicked man, repenting and forsaking his wickedness, would not be condemned by reason of his former iniquity, had been long before proclaimed in the name of Jehovah. The practical realization of this principle, however, and its application to

this most hated form of lawlessness, gave an entirely different aspect to the whole question. It brought into vivid relief the full import of what men professed to believe ; and while it, no doubt, shocked the multitude, and aggravated the hostility and disdain of the party of the Pharisees, it must have led some, at least, to understand the true significance of the principles to which they had been in the habit of giving a merely formal assent. It taught them the equality of all, at least of the circumcision, in the sight of Jehovah ; and that as he did not exclude from his Kingdom any one who exhibited true repentance, so they should not exclude such an one from their fellowship.

This conduct appears to have been one of the chief causes of the ultimate rejection of Jesus in Galilee, and there is, probably, no part of his example that has had so little effect upon the feelings and habits of respectable Christians. It can scarcely be doubted that any one who, at the present day, in this respect imitated the example of Jesus, would expose himself to the same reproaches. So little have even his influence and example availed in the very bosom of the Christian Church. Not that those who would be scandalized by such conduct can be suspected of having any but sound views with regard to the nature of sin, or the impossibility of claiming any merit before God. They would be the first to admit that all have sinned—that their very “righteousness is as filthy rags”—that as sinners all men are equal in the sight of God—that all sin is infinite, and that, therefore, there are no degrees of guilt as between man and God. But, nevertheless, they cannot but feel that as between one man and another a very great difference may be perceived. All sins may alike deserve eternal wrath, but all do not alike demand social reprobation. All are equal in the sight of God, but to the eye of man a distinction is apparent, which, in the interests of society, it is important to mark. Some sins are low, and exclude the criminal from the society of gentlemen. Some involve a loss of honour, and exclude the sinner from the society of ladies.

Nay, when two persons concur in the same sin, the one who may be the more guilty, shall, upon a mere graceful acknowledgment of his error, be admitted almost without a stain upon his character into the most eminently Christian circles, while the other, less guilty it may be, shall be excluded for life, as though, in spite of repentance and expiation, the pollution of her offence could never in this world be effaced.¹ There may be good reasons for this difference. At any rate, the question is far too wide to be discussed here. But such procedure on the part of those who profess to be Christians is at variance with the principle involved in the conduct of Jesus, when, being assured of the repentance of Matthew the publican, he sat down to meat at his table.

As has been before observed, there are grounds for supposing that the calling of Matthew was to some extent coincident with a change of feeling towards Jesus, which, perhaps, it had no small share in producing. It may, however, be suggested that this selection of a publican was the result of the proved indifference or hostility of the more respectable classes. After, or about this time, the attitude of the people and the character of the preaching of Jesus seem to have altered. First, the Pharisees are represented as taking exception to his eating with publicans and sinners; then the disciples of John demand an explanation of the neglect of the duty of fasting on the part both of Jesus and his disciples; then the Pharisees attribute his power of casting out devils to Beelzebub. Further, we find a protest from Jesus himself against the censure of those who accused him of being gluttonous and a winebibber, accompanied by a denunciation of those places that had heard his preaching, and had witnessed his wonderful works, because of their unbelief, and followed by what may almost be taken

¹ An illustration of this from the writings of an eminent Christian, who is an acute reasoner and liberal-minded man, may be read in the work on "Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister," by the Rev. Thomas Binney.

as an acknowledgment that his mission had failed, so far as regarded the instructed and respectable—the thanksgiving that the doctrines he taught were “hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes.”

It would seem, indeed, that the defection was not confined to the higher classes, since there appears to be also, about the same time, a change in the character of his public discourses. He is no longer the preacher of righteousness, proclaiming the blessedness of those who are loving and holy, declaring in words that all may understand the spiritual aspect of the law and its inward requirements, and promising safety to those who do what he commands. He is engaged in controversy, defending his character and conduct against open assailants; or he is the utterer of dark sayings, which he justifies on the ground that the people are dull and indifferent and do not deserve to receive direct instruction. He is still described as performing miracles, and as being followed by multitudes. The miracles, however, either excite no attention, as those of healing, or are referred to diabolical agency, as those of casting out devils. The multitudes listen to denunciations of his opponents, or are addressed in parables the interpretation of which is withheld from them. Even that touching speech, which has been the consolation of millions, and which few can at any time read without emotion: “Come unto unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest,” etc., appears rather to have been the outburst of an overladen heart, unable to restrain the expression of its unreciprocated love, than an address to any present audience. He has tried to awaken the people, and, learning their fickleness, he turns to a narrower but more appreciative circle to which to impart his instructions; feeling, apparently, that, so far as the advent of the Kingdom depends upon the preparedness of the multitude, it cannot as yet be looked for.

Such, at least, appears to be the purport of the narrative, and this view enables us to understand the varied aspects of the teaching of Jesus, which otherwise would seem to be unintelligi-

ble. It would be unsafe to rely upon the precise order of the events, in a history composed from tradition so many years after their occurrence ; but the general impression produced is such as we have described. He had attacked the Pharisees, exhibiting them as examples of the defective righteousness which his followers are not to imitate, and now they in their turn become the assailants. They deride his pretensions to Divine inspiration.¹ They attack his non-observance of their ceremonial precepts, notably as regards the observance of the Sabbath ;² and they require that he should shew some sign as a proof of his authority to teach new doctrines.³ He replies to them partly by argument, reiterating, in new forms and with varied illustrations, the principles he had previously laid down in the Sermon on the Mount, and partly by invective ; and appeals from them to the multitude. His appeal, however, seemingly awakens no response, for, after a few parables, he decides upon quitting the district, and retiring for a time into his own city, Nazareth. Here, however, he receives no support, and being followed by his adversaries even into the desert, whither he had withdrawn himself, he finally seeks a refuge in the land of the Gentiles.

The position of Jesus in reference to the observance of the Sabbath would seem to be analogous to that now assumed by the more liberal of the Scotch clergy with regard to the observance of the Lord's Day. He did not deny the sacredness of the seventh day, or the obligation imposed upon all Israelites to abstain from labour during its continuance. The contrary, in fact, was directly implied in his declaration of the permanence of the Jewish law, and the necessity of fulfilling all, even the least of its commandments. But he protested in this, as in other respects, against the narrow technical rules by which the commandment was overlaid, and which prevented its true character from being perceived. The Sabbath was made for man ; it was designed as an interval of repose and relaxation in which the mind and body might be rested and refreshed, and

¹ Matt. ix. 34 ; xii. 24.

² Matt. xii. 2-9, *seq.*

³ Matt. xii. 38, *seq.*

not as a period of wearying restraint or burdensome ceremony. The work forbidden was the ordinary avocations that men pursue during the first six days of the week; but not the healing of disease, or the assuaging of sorrow, or even such acts as the rubbing out ears of corn while passing through the fields. And as the prohibitions of the fourth commandment were directed only against work, it would follow, necessarily, that men may stroll out into the country and enjoy the fresh aspect of nature—may gather fruits and flowers, indulge in cheerful converse, and, in fact, employ the hours in the pursuit of any innocent pleasure. It can be no matter of surprise to any one, that a teacher who practically exemplified these principles should be unable to sustain himself against the assaults of the Pharisees.

The first parable spoken by Jesus—that of the sower—may be regarded as intended to illustrate his own experience. He had gone forth to sow the seed of the Word, and but a small portion had fallen upon the good ground. Of all who had listened to his teaching, how small the number in whom it had sprung up and multiplied and brought forth fruit; how great the number of those in whom it had perished, either immediately, or after a longer or shorter period of seeming promise; how many at once had rejected it with incredulity or disdain; how many had received it with joy, and had afterwards fallen away, because they could not endure the reproaches of the ceremonialists, or the contempt of the world; and how many had been drawn away by the occupations and anxieties of business! We can well imagine the mingled feelings of sorrow and indignation with which, under this figure, he depicted to the multitude his own mission and their rejection of him, and with which he turned to the few faithful friends that had adhered to him in spite of opposition and of temptation, and explained to them the lessons which, henceforth, it was useless to address to the populace. It was, as it were, the apology and justification for the change in his method of teaching, and

for his contemplated abandonment of the field in which he had previously laboured. He had scattered the seed broadcast, without regard to the soil in which it was to fall, and this had been the result; and now he had to change his sphere of action, and to confine his teaching to those who could understand and profit by his instruction.

There are reasons also for concluding that this experience of the fruitlessness of his labours, so far as concerned the mass of the people, produced some change in the views of Jesus with regard to the coming of the Kingdom. About this time, at least, he is represented as uttering a series of parables, in which the Kingdom of Heaven is successively likened to "the grain of mustard seed;" to "leaven;" to "treasure hid in a field;" to "the pearl of great price;" and to "a net cast into the sea."¹ It is not easy, at first sight, to understand the purport of the third and fourth of these, from the point of view of the disciples, to whom they were addressed; but the object of the first two was, obviously, to console them under the seeming failure of his mission by the assurance that, however small and obscure the beginning might be, the work he had commenced would increase and prosper. The Word he had preached, though hidden for the moment, would silently and secretly continue to operate until it had permeated the whole society. The seed he had sown, though insignificant in appearance, would, nevertheless, grow into a goodly tree. These parables are, consequently, consistent with the actual position and subsequent conduct of Jesus, and may be accepted as having been spoken by him at the period in question. It is quite possible, too, that the third and fourth may have had an analogous object, and that as the first two were designed to comfort the Apostles under present failure by the expectation of future success, so these were intended to impress upon their minds the conviction that the sure promise of the Kingdom, which they enjoyed, was an abundant

¹ We leave out of consideration, for the present, the parable of the good seed and the tares.

compensation for all the sacrifices which they had already made, and for the yet greater sacrifices that were about to be demanded of them. The last parable—that of “the net cast into the sea”—teaches, apparently, under another figure, the same lesson as that of the sower; the small number of those who enter the Kingdom, as compared with those to whom the invitation is addressed, and by whom it is, in the first instance, seemingly accepted. Viewed in relation to the position of Jesus, and his immediately succeeding withdrawal from the district, we may suppose them intended to prepare his disciples for a period of retirement and inaction, during which the lessons which he had taught might be left to produce their effect without being counteracted by that deep personal hostility which he had himself provoked.

In thus attempting to understand the immediate purport of these parables, we do not necessarily strip them of a deeper meaning. They may have been uttered in view of particular events and contingencies, and still be susceptible of a wider, possibly of universal, application. It can, however, scarcely be questioned that they were spoken by Jesus, and understood by the apostles, in relation to his and their position at the time. He had been preaching the Kingdom of Heaven throughout the cities of Galilee unsuccessfully, at least so far as outward results were concerned, and he was then on the point of abandoning the ungrateful task, and, for the time, of relinquishing his mission. Of this purpose the apostles could not have been ignorant, and the prospect might well have filled them with despondency. They might not unreasonably fear that the mission had failed altogether; that no further results were to follow, no fuller harvest to be gathered in; that, once relinquished, it would never be resumed. The parable that Jesus had addressed to the people seemingly implied this, for it would appear that the sower had finished his labours, and that all the seed sown in good ground had already yielded its full increase. It was, therefore, only natural that Jesus, if he had

not himself abandoned all hope of witnessing the fulfilment of his expectation, or if he contemplated a renewal of his efforts, should utter some words of encouragement to his followers, something that might enable them to understand and to share the hopes he still cherished. To this purpose, then, these parables seem well adapted, and thus understood they are significant and appropriate. Viewed in themselves, and apart from the circumstances to which they were originally intended to apply, they have, no doubt, a deep meaning for us; but that meaning would have escaped the apostles, or if perceived, would have brought with it no consolation. What to them, when they were on the point of retiring baffled from their enterprise, would have been the prospect that, in latter ages, among unknown peoples, in another form, and with other hopes, the doctrines that Jesus had been teaching should take root and flourish; what, when they were looking forward to the visible manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven in the restoration of independence and even supremacy to their nation, that it should work its unobserved way in the individual soul, penetrating and transforming the heart and the life. It would have been a mockery at such a moment to have addressed to them consolations of this nature, and of such a mockery, we may be assured, if only from their continued adherence to him, Jesus was incapable. If, therefore, those parables were really spoken by Jesus about this time, they must have borne such a meaning as that which we have attributed to them.

We are apt, in dwelling on the teaching of Jesus, to leave out of sight the obvious fact that what remains to us is only the merest fragments of what he said—just those passages which, as more graphic or pointed, or because they embodied some striking metaphor or parable, or were associated with some salient incident, fixed themselves in the memory of his hearers, and subsequently became current in the infant society.¹ These passages,

¹ Possibly only such of these as it was thought needful to reduce to writing for the use of the Church, because they had some bearing upon questions of the day.

however, we may be certain were employed by Jesus for the purpose of illustrating and enforcing the lessons he was desirous to impart. The parables, for instance, were not mystical utterances thrown out to bewilder the apostles, and to edify future believers. They were means adopted by Jesus to assist him in presenting practical lessons in a form at once intelligible and impressive. In the period of uncertainty which preceded his determination to seek a refuge beyond the borders of Galilee there must have been numerous occasions on which Jesus would refer to the effects of his preaching, to his purposes, and to his hopes—occasions on which he would comfort the apostles by reminding them of what they had secured by attaching themselves to him, and encourage them by predictions of the ultimate success of his cause; and, doubtless, many illustrations were then used that have not been preserved to us. But whatever was then said had, we may be assured, at least, a tacit reference to the existing emergency.

The parable of the good seed and the tares of the field has been passed over, because it appears impossible to suppose that it was spoken by Jesus at this time. It refers to a far later stage of development, of which even the germs did not then exist. It assumes a period when attempts had been made, at least with partial success, to introduce novel opinions and practices into the community, and when the “tares” thus sown were springing up in the midst of the “good seed” that had been sown by Jesus. The lesson it teaches is one of patience and forbearance on the part of the heads of the Church. They are to permit the growth of that which they perceive to be evil, rather than risk the destruction of the good with which it was intermingled, because, in the near termination of the existing order of things, Jesus himself will effect the necessary separation.

The earliest period to which it can be referred is the visit of Paul to Jerusalem, when Titus was required to be circumcised. It is clear that at this time there was a sharp controversy with regard to the terms of the admission of the Gentiles, and the

introduction of Titus as a brother while yet uncircumcised must have caused much angry feeling. There must even have been great doubt whether a person who had acted as Paul had done could be allowed to continue in the society, and we may be sure that a few of the more ardent disciples demanded his expulsion.¹ This demand would have been, we may believe, resisted by the apostles, who would feel the imprudence of alienating the large mass of Gentile disciples who had been induced to join the society through his preaching. They would themselves resent the conduct of Paul, as, at least, rash and illtimed, though they might consider that the services which he had rendered to the cause ought to be allowed to outweigh a momentary error of this nature. There would, doubtless, be many who considered him as an enemy. And all regarded as erroneous (though possibly inevitable) the practices which he sanctioned, and the doctrines with which they were associated. They were tares growing in the field of the Church in which the Son of Man had sown none but good seed. This parable may be taken to represent the feelings which induced those who regarded Paul as an enemy, nevertheless to permit him to continue in the society and to pursue his work of teaching. We may imagine such arguments as these to have been addressed by the leading apostles to their more uncompromising followers, in order to procure their acquiescence in the course ultimately adopted. And it is very probable that the parable originated at that time, and, therefore, that it formed a part of the first Gospel from the beginning.²

It is not necessary here to refer to the sayings of Jesus after

¹ The scandal that would be occasioned if it were known that the Bishop of Natal had attempted to introduce an unbaptized Zulu to "the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist" may afford a faint image of the scandal created in Jerusalem when it was known that Titus was not circumcised. And Paul was a sort of Colenso in his day, though his neology took a different direction.

² The essential idea of the parable is that expressed in the famous saying of Dominic : "God will know his own;" but the practical lesson deduced was opposite in the two cases. The Inquisitor made it a ground for killing, and the apostles for saving all.

his withdrawal to Nazareth. They do not teach any new lessons. There is still the same question with regard to the neglect of ceremonial observances ; and the results are the same. He retorts the accusations of the Pharisees by accusing them of violating the spirit while professing to obey the letter of the law ; and, after an ineffectual appeal to the multitude, he quits Galilee.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MESSIAH.

ACCORDING to the view which we have taken of the life of Jesus, his departure from Galilee to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon marks the termination of the first period of his ministry. He had traversed the various stages through which so many reformers have had to pass—popularity, doubt, indifference, and hostility; and had recognized that, whatever might be his success in another sphere, he had nothing further to hope in the region of his first essay. His retreat appears to have been finally decided by a fear lest Herod, who had already cut short the career of John the Baptist, should seize him also; and, accordingly, accompanied by his disciples, he removed beyond the sphere of his government. How long he remained in that region is uncertain. The only incident related is the healing of the daughter of a woman of the country, moved by her persistent prayer against his declared and, apparently, actual intention to the contrary. While here, however, his views of his own character and mission appear to have been developed; and it would seem that those of his disciples also had undergone a corresponding change. At least, it is in “The Coast of Cæsarea Philippi,” beyond the sphere of his original teaching, and near to Tyre, that the first open recognition of his being himself the Messiah takes place, and the manner in which he is reported to have received the acknowledgment shews how far even his disciples had previously been from enter-

taining such an opinion, and how deep was the impression it made upon Jesus himself.

It would, indeed, appear that the retreat into Phenicia bore the same relation to the second period in the life of Jesus that the retirement into the wilderness bore to the first, and that as the latter matured his purpose to become the preacher of the Kingdom—so the former developed and fixed the conviction that he was himself the Messiah, and enabled him to ripen his plans for asserting his claim to that character. The trial which he had already made must have convinced him that any further efforts in Galilee would be useless. He had preached in all its cities and villages, and excepting as regards the few disciples who had accompanied him into exile, and the still fewer who might secretly cherish an attachment which they were afraid to display, without any effect. He had been compelled to retreat before the threats of the Pharisees, and, finally, to leave the country to escape the dangers which menaced him from the suspicious attention of Herod; but no manifestation of popular sympathy or support had been called forth. It is true that he is described in the first Gospel as still followed by multitudes; but, if so, they could only be the idle and the curious, upon whom no permanent impression could be made, and from whom no reliable assistance could be hoped. If, therefore, anything was to be done, the attempt would have to be made in another quarter, and, possibly, with other means, or in another character.

Our general conclusions in this respect would not be sensibly modified if we were to suppose, with the writer of the first Gospel, that Jesus, after his retreat to Phenicia, had returned to Galilee for the purpose of making another attempt there, and had then, for some undisclosed reason, visited Cæsarea Philippi. But there is great difficulty attending such a supposition. As has been often pointed out, every thing described as occurring in this assumed intermediate visit is in substance a repetition of something before related, and bears the appearance of being another version of the same transactions, with such differences of detail,

however, as to lead a not very critical compiler to suppose that different events were referred to. It is not, perhaps, incredible that the same miracle, of multiplying food for the purpose of feeding the crowds that had collected, should be repeated ; and there is certainly no greater physical improbability in its being performed twice than once. Even, from the supernatural point of view, it seems to lower the character of such a miracle, or of any miracle, when it is made the means of saving, presumably, the same people twice from the consequences of a similar act of improvidence. It becomes, then, not so much an evidential work—a sign accrediting the performer¹—as a recognized means of supply upon which the multitude might depend as they could upon a bounteous host, whose house contained all the necessary provisions. In both cases, too, Jesus himself sends away the multitude ; in both it appears that it is necessary to take ship immediately afterwards ; and in both the Pharisees are represented as coming to Jesus almost immediately on his landing, and though their object is different on the two occasions, yet their demand and his reply on the second occasion are substantially the same as a previous demand and reply related at an earlier period in the same Gospel.

These duplicates of act and speech are scarcely probable. It is more easy to suppose, either that the compiler of the Gospel inserted two different accounts of the same event that he found in the written or traditional sources from which he drew, or that the account should be subsequently interpolated,² than that Jesus

¹ Father Newman appears disposed to give up miracles as evidences of doctrine, and rather to regard them as rewards graciously vouchsafed to eminent faith. This may be the case; excepting with regard to the Gospel miracles, the spectators of which were incredulous. If it is so, however, it would seem to follow that the more unintelligent and unreasoning the votary the higher and more profuse are the rewards offered. It may be doubted whether Father Newman is not too intelligent to have his faith thus rewarded.

² A strong reason for believing the entire passage to be a subsequent interpolation is furnished by the representation (Matt. xvi. 1), that the “Pharisees, also, with the Sadducees” came to tempt him. The writer of the first Gospel knew too well the antagonism between those parties to have represented them as acting together on this occasion.

should have so repeated himself. And it is observable that the Gospel does not suggest any motive for the return into Galilee at this period, nor for the subsequent visit to Cæsarea Philippi. It can hardly be supposed that Jesus returned with the intention of resuming his teaching, but was deterred by finding that he had again to encounter the incredulity and opposition of the Pharisees. This would argue a want of foresight or of courage on his part; of foresight in not anticipating the continued hostility of his former opponents, or of courage in not confronting what he had foreseen. Nor will it be said that he came once more to contrive an occasion for the display of his supernatural power, by first attracting the multitude into the desert, and then keeping them there till they began to suffer from the want of food. This, apart from the stupendous character of the alleged miracle, is inconsistent with the character Jesus assumed towards the people, which was that of a preacher of the Kingdom, and not a mere worker of miracles. It would exhibit him, too, in the undignified position of creating the occasion for repeating a miracle which neither in the former instance nor in this produced any effect upon the multitude or upon his disciples. And even if this were admitted as a sufficient reason for the return to Galilee, it would still leave the subsequent journey to Cæsarea Philippi unaccounted for. A fuller examination, therefore, appears to establish the conclusion that this alleged visit to the borders of the lake, between the occasion of the retreat of Jesus to Phenicia and his appearance in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, is unauthentic, and is due to some error on the part of the original compiler, or to some subsequent interpolation.

But if any one should persist in considering that Jesus did return into Galilee for the purpose of making one more attempt to win over the hearts of his own people, by appeals to their appetite for the marvellous, it cannot be denied that this renewed effort awakened no satisfactory response, and that he then withdrew to another place of retreat in which he might

safely deliberate as to his ulterior proceedings. Although, therefore, we are unable to accept this assumed visit as corresponding to any real event, yet even if it did so, it would only throw back for a short space the time at which Jesus found himself placed in the position of having to choose between the abandonment of his mission and its resumption in a new field.

When once this necessity was realized, the questions it suggested must have been full of anxiety and difficulty, both as regarded the place for any renewed attempt and the character in which it was to be made. If was true that his mission had failed in Galilee, but this might be owing to the character of the people; or it might be that he had, after all, selected the wrong place for his experiment. What if now he were to proceed to Jerusalem itself—the destined seat of the coming Kingdom; “the city of the great king”—and make that the theatre of his next effort! It was in that city that the Messiah was to appear and reign—from thence his Kingdom was to spread. What place, therefore, could be more appropriate for his purpose? But then, if Jerusalem was to be the scene of his ministry, in what character was he to present himself? John had already preached the Gospel of the Kingdom in Judæa, and had taught the doctrine of repentance for remission of sins. He had there, in fact, filled the place Jesus had subsequently occupied in Galilee. He had produced a profound and permanent impression upon the people, and had left a recognized body of disciples. Was Jesus to take up his mission from the point at which John had left it? If he did so, what probability was there that the disciples of John would accept him as the successor of their master; and if not, upon what grounds was he to draw a distinction between his own teaching and that of John, so as to entitle himself to a hearing. These were considerations that could scarcely fail to have presented themselves to Jesus when contemplating the renewal of his mission and its transfer to some other sphere, for these were the actual difficulties he would have to encounter. There was,

however, another course open to him—one that would relieve him from those embarrassments, though only, it might be, to meet other and greater;—that he should himself appear in Jerusalem as the Messiah, the coming one whose advent John had announced. And this was the course upon which he ultimately decided.

By what process he had convinced himself, and by what means he succeeded in impressing the conviction upon his disciples, that he, who had at first claimed to be only the herald of the Kingdom, was himself its king, must always remain a mystery. We cannot even rely upon the data of the first Gospel, for they are confused and contradictory. It would, for instance, appear that at a comparatively early period, in Galilee, he had declared John to be the Elias, and therefore, by implication, to have claimed to be himself the Messiah. And yet, at a much later time, when he is represented as having, for a moment, appeared to his more favoured disciples clothed with the glory that was to belong to him when he should be revealed in the clouds of heaven, they are described as doubting whether he could possibly be the Messiah, since Elias had not come. And they are then told, apart from the others, and as a new truth not yet disclosed to any one, that John was he. So, from time to time, Jesus is described as making claims that can only be understood to imply that he is the Messiah, and as doing acts that call forth from his disciples a worshipping recognition that he is the Son of God, while at the same time he takes no step to assert his dignity, and receives the declaration of Peter as though it had been so unwarranted by anything which he or others had said that it would only be due to the direct inspiration of God.¹ In this uncertainty all we can do is to accept the account in the first Gospel, so far as it is consistent with

¹ If those who were in the ship when Jesus allayed the tempest came and worshipped him and acknowledged him to be the Son of God, Matt. xiv. 33, what was there novel or surprising in the speech of Peter?

and tends to explain the conduct of Jesus. And hence we conclude that whatever half-formed beliefs might have arisen in his own mind, or in those of his disciples, while teaching in Galilee, it was while residing in exile, recalling the experience of the past and meditating the prospects of the future, that this conviction acquired consistency and strength ; and that there was some special occasion when it found emphatic expression in the mouth of Peter, and was accepted by Jesus as a revelation from God. This, at least, appears clearly to result from a comparison of the different portions of the first Gospel, that Jesus left Galilee as the preacher of the Kingdom, and that he returned to it prepared to proceed at once to Jerusalem, and there publicly to assume the character of the Messiah.

It would further appear that, in deciding upon this course, he foresaw and predicted to his disciples the probability of failure and of death, and, nevertheless, announced his determination to brave these consequences rather than shrink from the career which he had marked out to himself ; and that this determination was forced upon him by circumstances there is every reason to believe ; as also, perhaps, that when he announced to his immediate followers his intention of proceeding to action, he, at the same time, assured them that his prospects of success would be greater by carrying out his plans at once, whilst the adoption of a different course would, probably, only result in interruption and delay. And it may well be doubted whether, if Jesus on this occasion had really foretold his resurrection in the precise language of the first Gospel, the prospect of this result would not have overpowered, in the mind of Peter, the repugnance excited by the first part of the prediction.

We may fairly believe that some such scene actually occurred, for the phraseology of the rebuke stated to be addressed to Peter appears to indicate the reminiscence of a real saying of Jesus, and would hardly have been related had it not been too firmly

embedded in the tradition of the day to be omitted. And brief phrases like the previous commendation, and this quickly succeeding censure, are just the things which the memory does, in general, preserve. That Jesus, in looking forward to his intended enterprise, should have contemplated the possibility of failure, and his own death as the penalty, can excite no surprise. He had already been compelled to retire, unsuccessful, from his first attempt, made in a place selected by himself from his own previous knowledge, and his failure with the populace appears to have in a great degree, resulted from the opposition of the Doctors of the law and the Pharisees. The people, it is true, had at first heard him gladly, but their attachment to him had not been sufficiently strong to overcome the ties of habit. They had fallen away when they found that no immediate results followed his announcement, and that their recognized guides, the men to whom they had been accustomed to defer, regarded him as a deceiver or as heterodox. In Judæa, and, above all, in Jerusalem, he would be going into the very centre of the power of those who, on the outskirts of Judaism, had been too strong for him, and with no other support than that of the multitude, whose instability he had already proved; In Galilee he had been able to withdraw himself when his proceedings had excited the jealousy of the government; but in Jerusalem such withdrawal might be impossible. There was, consequently, ground enough for gloomy foreboding.

And yet, if he was that which his own conviction and the opinion of his disciples, speaking by the mouth of Peter, had recognized him to be—the Messiah; the Son of God; the destined instrument of founding the Kingdom of Heaven,—it was only in Jerusalem that his claim could be tested and his task accomplished. To visit Jerusalem, consequently, was the necessary pre-requisite of success, though it might be only the precursor of failure. And he may have had disciples there from whom he had learned that the time was ripe for such an enterprise—that the people were “waiting for the con-

solation of Israel,"—and, perhaps, the report of his teaching and works which had reached Judæa had excited a feeling of expectation, and a predisposition to recognize him as the Christ, of which it was well that he should avail himself. It is, in fact, difficult not to suppose this. The first Gospel states that among those who were attracted by his early preaching were some from Jerusalem and from Judæa beyond Jordan, and all probabilities favour the accuracy of this statement. In that case it might naturally be expected that some of these might have become his disciples, though they did not leave their business and their families to follow him. And, if so, at least an occasional intercourse would have been maintained between Jesus himself, or his more immediate followers, and these disciples, and each would be made acquainted with any movement or sentiment that might affect the common cause.

This is, no doubt, conjectural, but the conjecture rests upon grounds derived from the Gospel itself, and receives strong indirect confirmation from subsequent events. Unless Jesus had possessed friends and disciples in Judæa it is difficult to understand how he could have met with the welcome and the shelter that he found there from the first, or how he could have been able to attract the multitudes who hailed him as their expected king. It may be said that this is accounted for by the previous visits which he had paid to Jerusalem, and especially by the raising of Lazarus, as detailed in the fourth Gospel. And if we could accept that Gospel as historical, this explanation might be accepted, though not without raising other and greater difficulties. The reception of Jesus is accounted for more simply and naturally by supposing that visitors from Jerusalem had attached themselves to him in Galilee, and that the tie thus formed had never been severed.

Any conclusion which we may form with regard to the motives that influenced the conduct of Jesus upon this occasion can be only hypothetical, for our sole authority is silent on the subject. We might, no doubt, abstain from all con-

jecture, but this is not required of us so long as our conjectures are based upon the history and are warranted by analogy. We do not, indeed, pretend to understand or account for the process by which Jesus was induced to believe that he was the Messiah ; but our difficulty in this respect is diminished by our knowledge that many others about this time, or subsequently, entertained the same conviction with regard to themselves. Finding, however, as is clearly shown by the subsequent history, that Jesus did entertain this conviction, his determination to visit Jerusalem in spite of the fears of a fatal termination to his enterprise which he could not but entertain, appears to be accounted for principally by the circumstance that Jerusalem was to be the seat of the Kingdom, and that there only could his pretensions be put to the proof, but partly also by the circumstance that he had disciples there from whom he might expect assistance, and from whom, probably, he had received assurances of popular welcome and support.

As soon as his decision was formed Jesus appears to have returned to Galilee in order to prepare for his intended journey, and after a brief stay, during which he does not seem to have appeared in public, to have departed for Jerusalem. His route, so far as we can judge, lay along the east bank of the Jordan, avoiding Samaria. It would, indeed, have been inconsistent with the character which he had assumed, and would have seriously affected his prospects of success, if he had arrived in Judea as the friend and guest of the Samaritans. He was accompanied by the apostles and by some women, one of whom, the wife of Zebedee, appears during the course of the journey, and two others, Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James and Joses,¹ are subsequently mentioned as being present at the

¹ Is it possible that this could have been the mother of Jesus ? There seems a great improbability that in that case the other less honorable title should be given to her ; and yet, perhaps, this is not so improbable as that there should have been two Marys, each the mother of a James and a Joses, and that the mother of Jesus should not have accompanied him, though her son James was presumably one of the party. Can Joses be a corruption for Jesus ? The whole subject of the kindred of Jesus is, however,

crucifixion. No other persons are named, and we are left to conjecture if any others were in the company. Probably there were many whom the writer has not mentioned, either because they were not brought into the same intimate relation with Jesus as the apostles, or because none of them subsequently attained such a position in the infant Church that tradition had preserved their memory.

We should infer that the people had been prepared to expect the coming of Jesus, for they are described as flocking to him at once; it would appear, too, that the party of the Pharisees had received a similar intimation, for their emissaries met him almost as soon as he entered the country. This, at least, was no more than might have been expected. The purpose of Jesus to journey to Jerusalem could not have been kept as a secret; possibly, even, it had been publicly announced. The men, therefore, who had successfully opposed him in Galilee were not likely to leave their brethren in Judea uninformed on the subject. In Galilee the Pharisees had been at first neutral, and only after his public denunciation of themselves and of their teaching appear in the character of foes. In Judea they are the assailants; they encounter him at the earliest opportunity and continue their attacks until they apparently succeed in reducing him to silence. In fact, the greater part of his teaching in Judea is represented as drawn from him by their insidious questions or open assaults, so that, at last, wearied out by their unceasing antagonism, Jesus bursts out into a strain of invective against them, which closes his public utterances, and immediately precedes the negotiations for his betrayal.

In all this there is nothing more than Jesus is related to have foreseen and even predicted; nothing more, indeed,

involved in difficulty. The uncertainty in which the subject is left, the circumstance that the mother of Jesus is either mentioned by this appellation, or not mentioned at all in the earliest Gospel as having been present at the crucifixion (nor indeed on any other occasion in the public life of Jesus, excepting the one in which she is apparently rejected), show conclusively the slight importance attached to her at that time.

than any observer of common sagacity might have anticipated. It must always remain uncertain whether he regarded failure as inevitable, or how far his apprehensions were over-powered by his hopes. Probably the two feelings alternated as he contemplated the one aspect of his position or the other : the hostility which he must encounter, and the support he might expect. It is not impossible that the whole enterprise was the result of a hope born in extremity. On the one side was an old age spent in exile, a pensioner on the bounty of Gentile strangers, or as the alternative an obscure and inglorious existence in Galilee, purchased at the price of submission to his enemies and abnegation of his principles ; on the other an attempt, desperate, no doubt, and uncertain at the best, but having at least the chances of a glorious success, and in which even failure would be preferable to that ignoble termination of his career which he must otherwise accept. Out of the very desperation excited by his position might spring not merely the resolution to dare all, but also a confidence that he should succeed. Such a confidence, however, could not be permanently maintained. There must have been alternations of feeling both in himself and his followers ; gloomy forebodings on his part, on theirs a reluctance to face what seemed the inevitable issue, and attempts to dissuade him from his project. Then, again, visions of the realization of their hopes in the speedy establishment of the Kingdom—promises that the twelve should sit on thrones as judges of the twelve Tribes of Israel, and that all who had made any sacrifices for his sake should be abundantly compensated even in that which they had sacrificed,—and disputes for precedence in the anticipated dignities among the twelve themselves.

It is not easy to imagine what were the expectations of Jesus in the event of success ; in what manner he anticipated the establishment of the kingdom, or what was to be its precise character. There is an apparent inconsistency in the words attributed to him upon the subject. There are the promises cited above, besides that referring to the new wine to be drunk in the

kingdom, which necessarily implied to those who heard them the foundation of an earthly dominion, and the enjoyment of physical pleasures ; and there are other sayings which may be regarded as implying that the kingdom was to be spiritual, so that it is impossible to rely upon the completeness or accuracy of our materials. There are few portions of the sayings of Jesus more exposed to unconscious or intentional alterations than those in which he spoke of the consequences of his assumption of the character of the Messiah. And here, also, it is certain that we possess only an insignificant fragment of his conversation on the subject. It is, in fact, only necessary to realize for a moment the actual position of Jesus and of the apostles to be assured that such is the case.

When he formed the purpose to return to his own land, and to proceed to Jerusalem, Jesus and his apostles were together on the outskirts of Galilee. Can it be supposed that in the intimacy of the relations that subsisted between them, exiles as they had been for a common cause and alone at a distance from their homes, that their future course was not a subject of daily meditation and even of daily converse ? Not Jesus only, but every one of those who had followed him, must have been occupied with much that related to the resumption or renunciation of his mission ; must, in imagination, have attempted to picture the consequences of either line of action, and his followers at least must have frequently discussed these questions among themselves ; and living together as they did, the result of these discussions must also have been well known to Jesus, even if he did not take part in them, for this was a question in the decision of which each one of the little band had a direct personal stake, apart from the general interest that he might feel in the success of the cause—should he remain an exile, or return to his home and to the occupation he had quitted at the call of the Master ; or was another attempt to be made in a new sphere, the success of which might compensate for their first failure. Such considerations, in one form or another, must have been almost

constantly present to the minds of the disciples, and under any view of the character of Jesus he could not but have sympathized with them, and have occasionally, if not habitually, referred to those topics for the purpose of instruction or encouragement.

During the journey, also, from Galilee to Jerusalem, which must have occupied some days, and was marked by the enthusiasm of the crowd and the attacks of the Pharisees, there must surely have been frequent references to the same subject ; and when the popular favour, that greeted his arrival, enabled him to make his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and awed the Pharisaic and sacerdotal parties into a momentary submission, so that he could perform his work of cleansing the courts of the temple, retiring, perhaps, at night to the abode of some humble follower—can it be supposed that nothing was said by himself or his disciples either of gratulation at the success of his proceedings up to that point, or of disappointment, that in spite of everything the establishment of the kingdom appeared as far off as ever ? And, so, as time wore on, and the public enthusiasm cooled, the hostility between Jesus and the authorities became more embittered, the end of the struggle approached, and obviously nothing was to be hoped from the multitude ; besides, no supernatural aid was vouchsafed, and the failure of the enterprise appeared inevitable. When day after day he visited Jerusalem, and night after night retired to some secret asylum, was there no speech on his part to rouse the flagging energies of his disciples in moments of despondency—to point out the prospects of success, or to strengthen them under the anticipation of defeat ? Surely this cannot be suggested, nor yet that his sayings then made so little impression upon his disciples that they were forgotten, or were of so little interest as not to be worth reproducing. The only reasonable inference is that they were, for the most part, either contradicted by the event, or were found to be incompatible with the altered position and hopes of the disciples, and, therefore,

were not dwelt upon, and gradually dropped out of the received tradition. And this suggests the further inference that the reports which have reached us have been considerably modified in the course of transmission.

On four occasions only Jesus is reported to have referred to the consequences of his journey to Jerusalem. At Cæsarea Philippi, where Peter first recognizes him as the Messiah; during his brief stay in Galilee before its commencement; on the journey itself, presumably at Jericho; and after his arrival at Jerusalem, immediately before the anointing, at the house of Simon the leper.¹ On three of these occasions he is represented as distinctly and emphatically predicting his resurrection from the dead on the third day. It is, however, difficult to believe that such a prediction was in fact made, though we are not, perhaps, entitled peremptorily to reject it. The idea of the resurrection was familiar to the Jews. Most of them believed that at the coming of the Messiah all Jews, or, at least, all who had observed the law, would rise in the body to reign with him. There was, consequently, nothing incredible, perhaps nothing improbable, in the idea that the Messiah himself should be so raised. As, then, Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah, he might well believe that, even if put to death, his enterprise would not, on that account, necessarily fail, but that he would be raised from the dead to complete it. It is, indeed, not easy to reconcile the repeated utterance of a prophecy so precise, the accuracy of which, in all its earlier details, was demonstrated

¹ Matt. xvi., 21, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go up unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day;" xvii., 22, 23, "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again;" xx., 17, 18, 19, "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up unto Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of the Chief Priests and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify, and the third day he shall rise again;" xxvi., 2, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

by the event, with the terror and dispersion of the Apostles when the predicted blow was struck, and Jesus was betrayed and arrested. And yet it may be fairly suggested that the treachery of one of their own body, the actual seizure of their master by an armed party, the defection of the multitude, and the intervention of the Roman government, might, for the moment, produce a feeling of terror stronger than their faith, and might lead them to seek safety in flight, without our being, on that account, justified in supposing that they had never heard and believed such a prophecy. And it may be further urged that the readiness with which they are represented in the first Gospel as receiving the news of the resurrection, and their departure for Galilee immediately after hearing from the two Marys that Jesus had risen and appeared to them, and had directed them to repair thither for the purpose of meeting him, is only explicable on the ground that such a prediction had really been made. And, besides, there is not, in the first Gospel, anything inconsistent with this, since there is no reference even to any preparation for anointing the body; and the visit of the two women may fairly be referred to their anxiety to witness, themselves, the actual rising of Jesus from the tomb in which they had seen him laid.

This reasoning does not, it is true, remove all the difficulties suggested by the conduct of the Apostles, but it undoubtedly shews that the first Gospel possesses a consistency, in this respect, that does not belong to the last two, which relate the prediction, but represent the Apostles, after the crucifixion, as refusing to believe the report of the resurrection upon mere testimony and without sensible demonstration. Still, this kind of consistency is so often found in narratives, avowedly fictitious, that it cannot, by itself, be relied upon as an evidence of the truth of the story in which it is found. At the most, it proves that the account is free from any ground of objection. And, on the whole, though it is not incredible—perhaps not in any very high degree improbable—that Jesus might sometimes

have so spoken as if he really expected his own resurrection, yet the evidence we have is not, perhaps, sufficient to shew that he actually did so. There were abundant inducements, after the event had demonstrated the fallaciousness of the expectation of immediate triumph, for those who still retained their faith in Jesus because of their belief in his resurrection, to suppose that he must have, and, therefore, in fact had, foreseen the precise termination of his enterprise; and this, again, would inevitably lead to the belief that he had foretold everything in express terms. And the conduct of Jesus, though consistent with the fear of failure, appears rather to indicate an expectation of success,—still hardly compatible with the definite and unqualified predictions attributed to him.

After his arrival in Judæa, Jesus appears only to have delayed his entry into Jerusalem until the necessary preparations were completed to enable him to make it in accordance with what was expected of the Messiah. When this had been done, he mounted the ass prepared for him, and in that guise entered the holy city, surrounded by his disciples, and by numbers who had joined the party during the journey, and welcomed by the glad plaudits of the crowd. Probably no act of his life shews more clearly the essentially Jewish character of his mission, as conceived of by himself, than this public entry in the manner described. For, without raising the question whether the prophecy of Zechariah is to be understood solely in its literal sense, or whether it is, properly, susceptible of a double meaning, there can be no doubt that by every one of those who accompanied Jesus, and whose acclamations heralded his entrance, it was understood as applying to a Messiah who was to be the literal king of Jerusalem, or the capital of the kingdom of Judah; who was to unite all Israel under his sceptre, to strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Israel, and to bring all their scattered descendants to the land of Gilead and Lebanon.¹ By his assumption of this character,

¹ Zech. ix., 9, *et seq.*; x., 6, *et seq.*

consequently, Jesus held himself out to all—friendly, hostile, or indifferent—as the predicted monarch by whom these results were to be accomplished ; and to the eyes of all (for we cannot here except the Apostles) made his claims to their acceptance contingent upon his realization of these prophecies. As king of Jerusalem, then about to inaugurate the visible Kingdom of Heaven in the city of David, he claimed the support of his adherents and challenged the opposition of his foes.

It is, no doubt, difficult for us fully to realize this. We have not merely seen what his contemporaries saw—that the Kingdom was not then restored to Israel—but we have seen the whole Jewish people, as such, excluded from the spiritual Kingdom established in the name of Jesus as the Christ ; the majority as unbelievers, the minority, who at first believed, as heretics, and their places supplied by Gentiles who were only brought in by the prophet as accessories to his picture. We, therefore, unconsciously strip the scene of its real meaning, and look upon it as a mere symbolical fulfilment—something that brought Jesus within the terms of the prophecy—and that ought, among other things, to have convinced the Jews that he was, in truth, the Messiah which their own Scriptures had foretold. But this only shews our entire misconception on the subject, for such was really the belief of the multitude. It was because of this belief that they surrounded and welcomed him. And if they afterwards fell away from him whom they had, on this occasion, hailed as the Son of David and King of the Jews, it was because, while thus embodying scenically the formal marks by which the promised king was to be distinguished, he did not, in fact, realize any one of the essential features of his reign. It is only necessary to turn to the chapters of Zechariah that contain the prediction which Jesus is represented as thus assuming to fulfil, and to remember in what sense it was then necessarily understood, in order, we will not say to justify, but certainly to render intelligible the conduct of the Jews who, on one day, surrounded him

with admiring plaudits, and a few days afterwards contemptuously rejected him in favour of the Son of Abbas, who had, at least, put his pretensions to the test of the sword. No doubt we, looking back calmly on the whole scene (if any of us, with our early prepossessions, can really be calm and impartial in any judgment we pronounce upon it), can see the superiority of one who relied upon the intrinsic claims of truth and virtue to secure the favour of men and the help of God, over one who attempted to snatch a transient victory at the cost of bloodshed and suffering. But we have no right to expect such a judgment from men trained as the Jews were. And still less have we a right to condemn them for their rejection of Jesus as their king. They had been taught by their Scriptures to regard success as one test of truth ; to suppose that whoever failed in his enterprise, by that very failure afforded reasons to believe that God was not with him. And especially would this be the case with regard to their expected deliverer. He, as the Messiah, was to be the visible representative of Jehovah ; to establish His Kingdom ; to be glorious with His glory, and strong with His strength. When, consequently, Jesus, who had assumed this character, was found merely arguing and teaching, without furnishing any supernatural attestation of his mission, and when, betrayed by one of his disciples, was seized, condemned, and crucified, what wonder that the very men who had welcomed his arrival, because they believed he was, in fact, what he had claimed to be, should have rejected him before Pilate and derided him upon the cross ! This, however, anticipates the narrative, and carries us beyond our immediate object, which is simply to call attention to the emphatically Jewish character in which Jesus presented himself on the occasion of his public entry into Jerusalem.

At the head of his disciples, and accompanied by the crowd, Jesus proceeded to the Temple. There, his first act was to drive out the dealers who frequented its courts for the purpose

of supplying to worshippers from a distance the animals required for sacrifice, and the money-changers who were ready to facilitate the purchase by exchanging provincial for current coin. In the first flush of triumph this was, perhaps, not a difficult task. Many pious Jews must have been scandalized by the spectacle of eager and unscrupulous trafficking in the very precincts of the holy place, and the multitude that followed him would be prepared to support a measure which they regarded merely as anticipating that restoration of a purer and more perfect worship in the Temple which the Messiah was to inaugurate. It does not appear that any resistance was attempted ; and if some of the Pharisees who watched the proceeding intimated their surprise or displeasure, this was, apparently, a mere passing objection, silenced for the moment by his peremptory answer. Nothing appears to have occurred during the day to interfere with the success of Jesus. But no results followed. He entered Jerusalem as the Messiah ; in that character he proceeded to cast out the traffickers from the courts of the Temple ; he silenced gainsayers ; and then he retired with his disciples to Bethany, where, apparently, some of his adherents resided.

We have no information to guide us, and therefore can only conjecture the feelings with which Jesus sought his temporary home upon this occasion. He may have expected more than really occurred, and yet have been satisfied with the impression he had produced ; or he may have felt that the uneventful termination of a day that had begun so auspiciously was a serious discouragement to the hopes which he had cherished. There is an incident recorded on the following day—his curse of the barren fig-tree—which may, perhaps, be taken to indicate something of disappointment and bitterness on his part. It would be, perhaps, unsafe to draw any positive conclusion from this, for it is not easy to assign any intelligible foundation for the narrative. So far, however, as it may be taken to represent some actual occurrence or speech, it undoubtedly appears to indicate such

a state of mind. And it is probable that these were his feelings. He could scarcely hope, on any subsequent occasion, to excite the same popular enthusiasm in his favour, or to renew his attempt with equal prospects of success. It was, therefore, only natural that some sentiments of despondency and dissatisfaction should be felt and manifested, as he looked forward to the probable consequences of the course to which he had committed himself.

Whatever may have been the case with Jesus, there can be no ground for doubting that the feelings of the Pharisees were those of apprehension and anger. The preacher whom they had reduced to silence in Galilee, and whom they had opposed on his entry into Judæa, had shown himself strong in the support of the multitude, and full of confidence in himself and in his mission. They had been compelled to witness his proceedings without venturing to interrupt them, only daring to raise a weak and ineffectual protest. That their system was narrow and exclusive, deadening the feelings and cramping the intellect, reducing the noblest faith the world had till then known to a matter of rites and ceremonies, things that might have had their meaning at first, but had long since, to the worshippers, become devoid of all inner significance, sacrificing that which was greatest to that which was least—the inward to the external, the spiritual to the ceremonial,—may be, and no doubt is, true. And equally true is it that the religion which Jesus taught was, in all essential points, superior to theirs. Not the less, however, would they in their hearts and consciences believe that their own system was the only true one, that the reforms which Jesus had attempted to introduce would lead to a relaxation of morals and a disregard of religion, and that, on this account, it was their duty to oppose, and, if possible, to silence him. Probably other and lower motives may have aided to influence their conduct. There may have been personal animosity against one who had essayed, not altogether unsuccessfully, to render them con-

temptible in the eyes of the people, as well as own fear for their position and influence. But it is a mistake to suppose, as we are all too apt to do, that those who profit by what we see to be an abuse, are therefore dishonest in supporting it or in attacking the men by whom it is threatened. The two most signal abuses of the present time are, perhaps, the temporal power of the Pope, and the Protestant establishment in Ireland ; but no one has a right to doubt the perfect good faith of the Romanist who defends the one, or the Anglican who upholds the other, even though one of these should be a Cardinal minister, and the other an Archbishop of Dublin. In fact, the circumstance that class interests are involved in the maintenance of any system, generally has the effect of making its defenders only the more sincere, since the unconscious sophistry of the feelings is thus added to the unconscious sophistry of the intellect. While, therefore, we may believe the system itself to be utterly wrong, and might deem ourselves justified in resisting it to the utmost, we are, nevertheless, bound to admit that, probably, it not only seems right to its defenders, but even so absolutely right as almost to imply a moral obliquity in those by whom it is assailed. And of this principle we are bound to give the Pharisees the benefit. Placing ourselves in the point of view of Jesus, or even in the point of view of an Englishman of the nineteenth century,¹ we may see that his attacks were fully justified, and that the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven, according to his conception of it, would have been impossible, so long as the people were in bondage to the system of the Pharisees. We may cordially sympathize with his words when he called upon those who laboured and were heavily laden under the burthen of ceremonies and the yoke of tradition, to come to him that they might find rest, because his yoke was easy

¹ Excepting, perhaps, the Ritualists ; but they, though men of the nineteenth century, look at objects from the point of view of the fifteenth. These men, however, ought, if consistent, to vindicate the Pharisees against their anti-ritualistic opponent.

and his burthen was light ; and, at the same time, we may allow for the hostility of those who had grown grey in a system sanctioned by the patriots and sages of their nation,—identified with the heroic efforts of the Maccabees,—and made sacred by the blood of thousands slain in its defence. And we may understand how, rather than allow this system to be destroyed, they were prepared to adopt whatever means might be necessary to crush their opponent.

The public entry into Jerusalem, and the cleansing of the courts of the Temple, appear to have raised up against Jesus a new class of enemies—the Chief Priests and Elders—the leaders of the conservative party. At least, it is now for the first time that they appear upon the scene. Henceforth, however, they are associated with the Pharisees in their attempts against Jesus ;—the pressure of a common danger, apparently, inducing these two parties to act together in spite of their habitual estrangement. The next few days were, it would seem, passed in reiterated endeavours on the part of his various foes to bring him into discredit with the multitude, or to involve him with the Roman authorities ; but it would seem without success, since he is represented as evading the snares spread for him, or as silencing his questioners. But, although Jesus is thus described as victorious in every encounter, he is, nevertheless, brought to feel the uselessness of further efforts. He recognizes the fact that, in Jerusalem also, his mission had failed, and he announces its abandonment.

It is not improbable that the Pharisees were at first impressed with the imposing character of his entrance into Jerusalem, and were disposed to watch the result, and that their opposition became stronger and more demonstrative, as every day appeared to render it more certain that none of the expected consequences would follow. And it would inevitably happen that the same delay that encouraged them would lessen the prestige of Jesus with the multitude, and diminish in an equal degree his own hopes of success, so far as these rested upon the moral

reformation of the people, or upon their personal adhesion to himself. No subsequent demonstration was made in his favour by the populace, who, no doubt, waited for some action on his part, or for some invitation to action, to which they might respond. He could scarcely have been otherwise than unconscious of his lessening influence, and he must have felt that it was impossible it could be regained. He must therefore have understood that it was fruitless to continue to expose himself to attacks which were repelled on one day only to be renewed with more pertinacity on the next. Hence, he in his turn becomes the assailant. He denounces the Doctors of the Law and the Pharisees, and when he has exhibited the essential opposition between their teaching and his own, he turns to the multitude and announces to them the intended termination of his labours. This, at least, appears to be the natural, and indeed the only conclusion to be drawn from the pathetic appeal to Jerusalem, and from the words, "Ye shall not see me henceforth until you shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."¹ And though the precise language here attributed to Jesus is probably coloured by the influence of later events, yet there appears no reason to doubt that some such apostrophe was uttered by him, and that it marks the termination of his public teaching. After this, all his discourses are related as having been addressed to his disciples alone.

The invectives with which he had overwhelmed the Pharisees would naturally deepen their animosity. And probably neither they, nor the Chief Priests and rulers, would attach any

¹ An attempt has been made to found an argument in support of the fourth Gospel upon the words of the appeal to Jerusalem,—“How often would I have gathered thy children together,” etc.,—as though such a speech were unintelligible from the data of the first Gospel, and were explained by those of the fourth. The argument, however, fails under both aspects. In the first place, Jesus, who for several succeeding days had visited Jerusalem, as the Messiah, in the hope of meeting with popular recognition and support, might well use the words, “How often,” in reference to these repeated essays; and in the second, there is nothing in the fourth Gospel to shew any such kindly emotion towards the people of Jerusalem, or any such invitation to them as could suggest or justify such an image as Jesus here employs.

weight to his announced determination to abandon his public efforts, even if they had been aware that such a determination had been expressed. Accordingly, as the only means of averting the danger by which they were apparently threatened,—the Chief Priests and Elders, of seeing a revolt of the people in favour of a new pretender,—the Pharisees, of daily hearing their practices derided and themselves denounced before the multitude,—they decide upon procuring his arrest, trusting, apparently, to discover afterwards the means of condemning him; or, it may be, having at first no definite purpose beyond that of silencing for the moment a troublesome pretender, and keeping him out of the way until the concourse of people brought together by the feast should separate, and Jerusalem be left to its ordinary population.¹ Apparently, they did not deem it safe to attempt his seizure in public. They accordingly sought means of following him to the place to which he was accustomed to retire at night, where he might be taken without any fear of a rescue. This, apart from all other motives, they would desire to avoid, lest it might give occasion for the armed interference of the legionaries quartered in the City. The treachery of one of the immediate followers of Jesus furnished the necessary information, and measures were at once adopted to secure his person by detaching an armed party, who were to place themselves under the guidance of the traitor, and—when, by his help, they had effected their purpose—were to bring their prisoner before the Council summoned to examine him.

While such was the purpose of his enemies, what were the position and prospects of Jesus himself? It would seem from the circumstance that it was thought necessary to bribe Judas in order to avoid a public arrest, that considerable popular interest was still supposed to attach to his movements. But though he had visited the city and the temple day after day, there had been no popular movement in his favour, and no sign

¹ It is not impossible that, so far as the Chief Priests and Elders were concerned, their action may have been quickened by some intimation from the Roman authorities.

from Heaven pointing him out to the multitude as the Messiah ; and he had now formally receded from the task. Whatever therefore was to be done, so far as human agency was concerned, must result from some voluntary demonstration on the part of the people ; and of this there appeared no prospect. The day of the feast of unleavened bread was drawing near, and shortly after that the visitors from a distance would begin to disperse. If before that time some event did not occur to introduce the Kingdom, the failure of his attempt would be complete. And what prospect was there that any such event would occur ? He could not be unaware of the machinations directed against him, or, at the least, he must have foreseen the probability that some measures would be taken to reduce him to silence. Even had it been consistent with his views of the nature of the Kingdom to attempt an armed resistance, his experience in Galilee must have taught him, if he had need of such teaching, how little reliance could be placed upon the multitude. It seems certain, however, that, in this respect, his views had remained the same ; that he had never contemplated the employment of force, and that he had not merely decided not to have recourse to it in his own defence, but had never formed any body of disciples who would have been available for the purpose.

So far as our scanty materials enable us to form an opinion, Jesus appears to have relied, in his attempt in Jerusalem, partly upon the influence of his doctrine to bring the whole willing people round him, but principally upon some direct divine interposition pointing him out as the Messiah, and leading to his immediate recognition as such by friends and foes, by Jews and Gentiles. This had not yet been manifested, but possibly the occasion for its manifestation had not yet been furnished. It might be that in accordance with the Old Hebrew saying, "in the Mount it shall be seen," his situation was not yet sufficiently desperate to justify any supernatural interference. It might be that it was needful for him to fall into the hands of his enemies, to be exposed to their insult and cruelty, to be threatened with

death, nay to be doomed to die, before, as in the case of Isaac, God would interpose on his behalf. It might even be needful that the extremity of death itself should be endured before God would manifest himself. It might be that a sacrifice was required, that some one must devote himself to die in order to purchase for his people the long promised and long delayed advent of the Kingdom. Such thoughts were not unfamiliar to the Jewish mind¹ any more than the deeds that such thoughts should prompt. And though even his death might not suffice, though he might be forsaken by God to the end, yet what was the alternative? An ignominious flight into a foreign land, or a yet more ignominious abandonment of his pretensions. We cannot suppose that the idea of war at once against the rulers of the people and their religious guides, and also the forces of the Empire ever presented itself. His avowed principles would have forbidden such a course, even if he had not instinctively felt its hopelessness. His choice, therefore, if God did not intervene, lay between death on the one hand, or flight or submission on the other, and of these we may well believe that he would choose death. Even, therefore, if warned of the treachery of Judas, as was probably the case, he may have decided to allow it to be successful. Such a termination of his career may have been contemplated as possible from the very commencement, and it would not have become him when the anticipated danger was imminent to turn from his course. He, accordingly, is represented as having tranquilly pursued the course which he had marked out for himself, without attempting by any precautions to elude or to delay the projects of his enemies. He ate the passover with his disciples, obscurely and under a figure intimated to them the doom that awaited him, and the treachery of which he was to be a victim, and afterwards proceeded with them to the garden at Gethsemane, where he was arrested.

¹ Nor to the heathen either. Witness the instances of Codrus, Curtius, Decius, and others, which, whether fabulous or historical, shew that the idea of self-sacrifice for the sake of country was well known and highly prized.

Into the details of the closing scene, the last moments of freedom, when Jesus, betrayed by one of those to whom he had confided his aspirations and his purposes and had chosen as his peculiar disciples, one whom he had loved and trusted, was waiting for the emissaries of the Sanhedrim who had been despatched to seize him, we do not attempt to enter. The picture presented to us is necessarily ideal, for no one was present to witness his prostrations or to listen to his prayers. The petition he is reported to have offered, accords with the view which we have taken of his character and feelings. It displays a natural shrinking from the doom that he foresaw, overcome by a sense of duty ; that struggle between the lower and loftier elements of humanity from which even the noblest natures are not at all moments exempt, but which here resulted in resignation and patient resolve. It displays also faith in the goodness and submission to the will of the Father. If this were to be the end, if, after all that he had taught and done and dared, nothing remained to him but to fall into the hands of his foes, if he also were called, as so many of the Prophets that preceded him had been, to seal his testimony with his blood, to die with hopes unrealized and purposes unfulfilled, leaving it to the unknown future to determine how much of his work should survive ; even this, bitter as was the cross, was to be accepted, rather than shrink from his task or distrust his God. Such is the general result of the picture presented, and we may accept it as substantially true. One thing was hidden from him, which had he known, would have added to the bitterness of the hour. He could not have foreseen that the hopes he had contributed to excite would lead, not to the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, but to the destruction of the Jewish nationality, and almost to the extinction of the Jewish people ; nor that, in his name and for his sake, the seed of Abraham, for whom through life he had laboured, and for whom he was then ready to die, would during long ages be subject to every form of persecution and ignominy. It is a noble but not a solitary picture that Jesus here presents ; that

of a man prepared rather to endure any extremity than be false to himself and to the truth. It is exceptional rather in its consequences than in its character. Few martyrdoms have been so fruitful in results ; perhaps none has been so. Others, however, may have equalled it in the constancy and firmness of the sufferer, and many have exceeded it in the intensity of the suffering.¹

¹ The orthodox view of the nature of Jesus, while it may, to those who do not fully realize its consequences, enhance the merit of the self-sacrifice, can only do so by depriving the act of nearly all its painful accompaniments. Under this view Jesus, as God, not merely foresaw it with all its consequences from all eternity ;—saw in it the necessary link in a long chain of sequences ending in the establishment of his spiritual Kingdom ; saw it as the necessary condition of his own resumption of his divine glory ;—but actually brought it about in order that these results might be realized. Surely this must have stripped death, as death, of all its terrors, and have reduced the whole suffering to the mere physical endurance, which must have been insignificant to infinite power. And if it be said that, at this time, Jesus, as God, took upon himself the burthen of the sins of the whole world, and endured an equivalent suffering to purchase the happiness of the elect ; it is for those who hold such an opinion to shew how it is reconcilable with the unchangeableness of God. The ordinary explanations of this really imply that God wrought a miracle upon himself, which changed his own nature for the occasion.

C H A P T E R V I I .

CONTROVERSY.

THE discourses attributed to Jesus during the second period of his career exhibit, for the most part, a marked change, as compared with those delivered in the first; corresponding to the different character in which he appeared, and the altered relations it involved. It is not that the fundamental principles of his teaching were altered, for these remained in substance the same, but the occasions of speaking, the topics selected, and the manner in which they are treated were different. Throughout the first stage of his public life his utterances were almost invariably spontaneous; whether he was pronoucing the conditions of blessedness, or declaring the essential principles of the law and the spirit in which it is to be obeyed, or rebuking the indifference of the people, or veiling his lessons in parables whose interpretation was confined to his disciples, in all it is the voluntary and unforced expression of his own sentiments which we find. There is little of controversy or invective, and what there is belongs almost entirely to the period immediately preceding his retreat. And his teaching was almost always public, and was throughout appropriate to the position of one whose office was not to found the Kingdom of Heaven, but to proclaim the terms of admission to its privileges.

After the departure from Galilee, however, all this is changed. He no longer addresses his discourses to the multitude. To them he appeals in another character, and calls upon them by

well understood symbols to witness and support his assumption of sovereignty. The only teachings not directed exclusively to his disciples appear to be drawn from him by the questions or attacks of his gainsayers ; and it is not until the last moment, when he feels that his enterprise has failed, that he turns to the surrounding crowds. And then his purpose is not instruction but denunciation. He does not so much teach, as inveigh against various forms of error exemplified in the doctrines and practices of the Scribes and Pharisees. And having done this, he appears to have retired into privacy, and to have confined himself exclusively to the society of his disciples. His public teachings, consequently, are occasional and fragmentary, controversial rather than didactic, and having a relation to the questions propounded, which must be kept in view in any conclusions drawn from them. And his private instructions to his disciples chiefly refer to the conduct to be pursued, and the spirit to be displayed in view of their position in the coming Kingdom ; or, when it was obvious that its establishment was not as near as had been anticipated, to the importance of constant readiness, and to the signs by which they might discern and be prepared for its approach.

During the brief stay in Galilee, before making his first and only entry into Jerusalem, he delivers no public discourses. All that he says is spoken to his disciples. The new character which he has assumed is represented as suggesting new questions, and demanding new lessons. Now for the first time we hear of a doubt whether he, who is himself the King of the Jews, though he has not yet assumed the title, is liable to the payment of a tribute. The doubt is resolved by Jesus in favour of submission ; but his dignity is preserved by the miraculous source from whence the funds are supplied. It is probable that this incident, though obviously legendary, does really preserve the record of some actual discussion between Jesus and his disciples as to the conduct to be pursued where payment of the capitation tax was demanded, and we may be quite sure that Jesus would

comply with the demand rather than invite a premature attention to his assumed title. Now, too, for the first time, questions are raised as to who shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, which call forth lessons of humility, that are on more than one occasion repeated. And, at the same time, Jesus is represented as enforcing in a somewhat different form lessons that he had before taught, as to the necessity of avoiding or removing everything that may be a cause of offence, and as to the forgiveness of injuries. Mixed with these, which are suitable to his character and position, are phrases not easily to be reconciled with either, such as the references to the Church, and the power to bind and loose, stated to be conferred upon Peter and upon the Apostles. With regard to the Church, unless we suppose a power of prophetic insight in the Apostles, which their whole conduct prior to the death of Jesus contradicts, the phrases "upon this rock will I build my Church," and "tell it to the Church," would have been absolutely unintelligible to them, for there was no body of men at that time, nor of course would there be in the new order of things, answering to the idea afterwards represented by the word "Church." And with regard to the power to bind and loose, it is inconsistent with the terms of his lessons of humility, and with the anticipated establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven. They both bear the impress of a much later period, when the Church was a recognized body, and was regarded as the fitting arbiter of disputes among its members, and when the power of binding and loosing¹ was an important part in the powers it assumed.

It is possible that the altered character in which Jesus ap-

¹ Even assuming, contrary to the above view, that the words were spoken by Jesus, and that, so far as they relate to the Apostles, they are, consequently, to be regarded as implying a promise which believers must assume is in perpetual course of fulfilment (for the promise to Peter is personal and restricted to him individually); it is obvious that only those can be recognized as possessing it, who can shew the other mark given at the same time; viz., that any joint prayer by two or more of them is at once visibly fulfilled. With regard to the phrase, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," see D'Eichthal "Les Evangiles," Vol. I., p. 225, and the "Gospel of St. Thomas—Cowper's Apocryphal Gospels."

peared was not the sole, though it must have been the principal cause of the change in his method of teaching. It may be that, in the rapid course of events—only two or three weeks at the utmost intervening between his entrance into Judaea and his seizure—no suitable occasion was presented on the road or in the city for any such discourses as had marked the commencement of his ministry. As already pointed out, he is represented as being at once encountered by the Pharisees, and they appear to have allowed him but little respite. They begin by proposing a question on the subject of divorce, with the view apparently of compelling him either to sanction a lax practice at variance with the higher principles of morality that he inculcated,¹ or to place himself in opposition to the law of Moses, and, possibly, to the popular feeling; or, at the least, to entangle him in a maze of subtleties if he attempted to define the character of the permitted cases of divorce. If, however, his questioners expected to entrap Jesus into any unworthy compromise of principle, they were disappointed, and not less so if they hoped to involve him in the meshes of casuistry. He vindicated the sanctity of the marriage tie, and condemned the law that permitted the man, at his mere pleasure, and apart from the one sufficient ground, that of adultery, to dissolve it, by a reference to the equality of the sexes as indicated in the account of the creation, “He which made them at the beginning made them male and female;” and to the terms of the institution of marriage, “they twain shall be one flesh.” And when confronted with the law of Moses, he answered by pointing out its relative and temporary character, and by denying its competency to abrogate the higher law of nature, which is also that of God.²

¹ Opposed, indeed, to his formal teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, if he is correctly reported.

² The purport of the answer of Jesus has been strangely misconceived, by taking it absolutely, and not in reference to the existing practice among the Jews, and to the object of his questioners. The Pharisees ask his opinion of a law that permitted the husband,—at his mere will,—upon the most frivolous pretence, without any appeal to a court of justice, and in opposition to the wishes of his wife, to pronounce a divorce.

The next saying attributed to Jesus, is one which it is very difficult to believe was ever uttered by him, and quite impossible to believe was really spoken on this occasion. He has, in answer to the Pharisees, openly pronounced an eulogium upon marriage as a divinely-appointed institution, and has vindicated the position and rights of the wife against the capricious power of divorce, which the Mosaic law conferred upon the husband. And then he is represented, apparently in secret with his disciples, as contradicting this public teaching, and admitting that the yoke of matrimony is, on that account, so intolerable to the man, that he may wisely even make an eunuch of himself, for the purpose of escaping the burthen. To the Pharisees he says, in the hearing of the crowd, "God created man, male and female. God instituted marriage, and commanded that a man should leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. God pronounces that man and wife are one flesh, and the tie, thus appointed and sanctioned, confers equal rights upon both parties, and cannot be sundered by the man at his pleasure." And then, turning to his disciples, he says, "This is for the public, one of the dark sayings in which I am compelled to

To this Jesus answers in substance ; the man has no special power or prerogative over the woman in this respect, for the Scriptures relate that they were created together, and marriage makes them one. The woman, by adultery, forfeits her station as wife, and justifies the husband in putting her away ; but nothing short of this justifies him in so doing, and if he assumes to divorce upon any other ground the obligations of the marriage tie still subsist. There is nothing here as to the right of States to regulate the continuance of the marriage tie, or to prescribe the conditions upon which it may be dissolved ; nothing even to prevent its voluntary dissolution by the parties themselves. The whole of the answer has in view an entirely different question, and so far as admitted to be authoritative, would, at the present time, allow the husband, without judicial intervention, to divorce a wife who had committed adultery, and to marry again.

It is true that the words, "What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder," seem, at first sight, to declare the marriage tie to be indissoluble ; but it is obvious, however, that the true meaning is "a man," or "the man." This results clearly from the tenor of the answer itself ; and the word is the same (*ανθρωπος*, without the article) as in the question of the Pharisees, when it is rightly translated, "a man." And, independently of this, it is an universal rule of interpretation, both critical and juridical, that general terms are to be qualified and restrained by the context.

envelop my doctrines, in order that they may not be too plainly perceived ; but, in truth, marriage thus understood would be insupportable." It is, no doubt, possible to give another turn to the saying, that would render it less derogatory to Jesus, though probably none that would accord with modern Protestant views. Upon the assumption, however, that we have here an accurate report of the whole scene, this is the meaning the speech must have had to the disciples, for it is the answer of Jesus to their comment upon his reply to the Pharisees, that if such were really the obligations of marriage, it was better for a man not to marry. And on this ground it appears impossible to accept it as part of his teaching. His answer to the Pharisees was not a parable nor an enigma, but a plain and direct enforcement of a high principle of morality, and it would argue a cynical contempt for the people in whose hearing he had spoken, and a cynical indifference also to the opinion of his disciples, scarcely conceivable, if Jesus had thus, by necessary implication contradicted to one class of hearers, the doctrine which he had the moment before taught in their hearing to the other.

It would in fact seem upon these grounds that this passage could not have formed a part of the original Gospel. The author of our first Gospel shews himself fully capable of appreciating the teaching and character of Jesus. And it is not probable that he could have written this passage without perceiving the light in which it placed Jesus, or that, seeing this, he would have inserted it without regard to its effect. And, besides, what means this strange eulogium upon eunuchism in the mouth of a Jew speaking to Jews at this period ? It would have been as unintelligible and shocking to them as it is to Protestants of the nineteenth century (or rather as it would be if they did not explain it away), and as it has been to the Romish Church at all times. It recalls the strange fancies of some among the Gnostics who carried their contempt for matter, in theory at least, to this extreme ; but it has no affinity to the doctrines

taught by Jesus nor to the practices sanctioned by the Church. The example of Origen, however, shews that it has not been altogether inoperative, and it has always tended to foster the latent Gnosticism which lies at the basis of so much of mediæval and modern asceticism. It is allied to the spirit that peopled the deserts of the Thebaid, and founded the monasteries of Western Europe, but it has no point of contact with the teaching of him who came eating and drinking, who taught the divine origin of marriage, and enforced the performance of all the duties arising out of that relation.

It is not, perhaps, easy to reduce to any order the lessons taught by Jesus during this period. We may combine in one view the statements with regard to the Kingdom of Heaven addressed to his disciples,—and on one occasion to the Sadducees,—the description of the signs that are to precede the coming of the Son of Man, and the parables enforcing the necessity of foresight, watchfulness, preparation, and fidelity in view of that event. The anticipation of the immediate establishment of the Kingdom appears to have awakened feelings of ambition among the disciples; and already there were disputes with regard to their relative rank in its dignities. This called forth the rebuke of Jesus and the renewed enforcement, under another form, of lessons which he had already taught. The qualification for the Kingdom of Heaven is childlike humility and teachableness; and a high position there is to be the need of him who has voluntarily abased himself for the purpose of serving others. At the same time, the disciples, who have given up everything to follow Jesus, are to have their recompense in an elevation of dignity, corresponding to the greatness of the sacrifice which they have made. And all who have for his sake, or for the sake of the Kingdom, made any sacrifice of friends or of goods, shall receive an ample and overflowing reward. The state of those who are raised from the dead to share in the Kingdom of Heaven is like that of the angels; they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but that Kingdom is not to be without its physical enjoyment, since

there Jesus is to drink new wine with his disciples. The Son of man will come suddenly and unexpectedly, like the flood in the days of Noe, upon a heedless and unprepared generation, and, therefore, the true disciples must be watchful and ready, in an attitude of constant expectation, with their loins girt about and their lamps burning, prepared to meet their Lord ; but there are signs by which the instructed may be forewarned of its approach, and thus be enabled to make the requisite preparation ; and, while waiting, they must diligently and faithfully employ whatever gifts have been entrusted to them. The precise time of his coming is uncertain, and known only to the Father himself. This alone is determined,—that it shall occur before the existing generation has passed away.

So far, and without dwelling upon the details of the predicted signs, there is nothing we may not accept as probable. If, however, we minutely examine those details, it becomes impossible to regard them as having been really foretold by Jesus, under whatever aspect he may be regarded. Viewed as a man, this precise prescience of events that were not to occur for nearly forty years, is at any rate so improbable, that nothing but direct contemporary evidence could render it credible. And instead of this it rests entirely upon the authority of writings composed contemporaneously with the events supposed to have been predicted. And if, in the face of this improbability, we were to assume that this might be one of the exceptional cases in which a more than ordinary sagacity enabled a watchful observer of events to see the direction which they were taking, and to anticipate the results which they would produce, there would still be the difficulty, that although the prediction was fulfilled up to a certain point in what may be termed its accessories, yet it failed in its essential feature. There was the abomination of desolation ; there were false Christs arising ; there were persecutions of the disciples ; there were wars and rumours of wars ; there were famines and earthquakes, and pestilences ; but though all these events occurred, and though the whole of the generation that

heard his discourses has long since passed away, the Son of Man has not yet been manifested in the clouds of Heaven, sending his Angels with the sound of trumpet to gather his chosen people from the four corners of the earth.

These predictions have now for many ages been interpreted by orthodox commentators in a manner which is supposed to vindicate the prophetic power of Jesus ; but, thus understood, they would break the promise, not only to the hope, but to the ear. It is impossible that the disciples to whom they are supposed to have been addressed should not have understood them to imply the founding of the Kingdom which he had preached, —that Kingdom of which Jerusalem was to be the capital, in which they were to occupy prominent positions, and in which the Children of Israel were to be the chief citizens, by the supernatural appearance of Jesus in the clouds in their lifetime ; and, instead of that, they foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion and rejection of the Jews, and the ultimate establishment of the visible Christian Church. Certainly never was language less adapted to convey to those who heard it the real meaning of the speaker, than was the language here attributed to Jesus, as now generally understood ; and never was prediction more signally falsified as understood at the time. And this renders it as improbable upon the orthodox view of the character of Jesus, that he should have uttered a prediction which shews that he was either mistaken himself, or that he purposely misled others, as it is upon the historical view that he should have so accurately foreseen the course of events for so many years after his death. The only reasonable conclusion in a case like the present, when an alleged prophecy displays accurate knowledge up to, and ignorance beyond, a given period, is that it was composed, or at any rate received its existing shape at that period. And such is our conclusion. Presumably, the entire form of the prediction is due to the impression made upon the disciples by the scenes which they witnessed, just before the fall of Jerusalem, and to their belief that events so disastrous could

only presage the termination of the present, and the introduction of the better age, which Jesus was to inaugurate. And this view is confirmed by the circumstance already pointed out, that the prediction is modified in the third Gospel, and omitted in the fourth; suggesting, at least, that even before the former was written, circumstances had occurred that rendered its first form unsuitable.

In connection with the establishment of the Kingdom stood the question as to the person of its founder. As Jesus claimed to be the Messiah it was natural, and, in fact, inevitable, that some inquiry should be made into his credentials, whether he fulfilled the conditions which, according to the more instructed Jews, were to be the tokens of Messiahship; and one of these was that he should be a Son of David. Jesus is represented as himself referring to this opinion, and disputing its accuracy; but, according to the ordinary view, for no purpose but to deceive and embarrass his adversaries. According to the account in the first Gospel, those who had never heard of the story of the miraculous conception, or who disbelieved it—and we may be sure that the Scribes and Pharisees were in one or the other of these classes—must have believed him to be the Son of David, because his supposed father Joseph was such. Certainly it must have been known that this was the pretension of the family. The natural and obvious course for one who claimed the dignity, and who knew that he possessed this qualification, would have been to call attention to the fact, and, in the event of its being disputed, to challenge enquiry, secure of establishing its truth. But the conduct of Jesus was the very reverse of this. Instead of asserting his descent from David as one proof that he was the Messiah, he denies the truth of the belief that the Messiah was to be the Son of David; and thus furnishes to his opponents a ground for disputing his claim to the title. Indeed he supplies the material for a very easy and obvious syllogism, to prove that, whoever he might be, indisputably he was not the Messiah. “The Messiah cannot be the Son of David, but you are such;

therefore you cannot be the Messiah." And if it should be argued that the only purpose of Jesus was to turn against the Pharisees their own method of reasoning, and to shew the contradictions in which it involved them, this argument would imply that he so managed his dialectics as to lead all who heard him to entertain a false opinion as to his own belief, and a false conclusion as to the fact; for, in truth, he knew that the Messiah was to be the Son of David, and that he fulfilled the condition. Whoever heard these words must have understood Jesus to argue that the current opinion of the descent of the Messiah from David was erroneous, and hence, if they were aware of his claims to such a descent, must have had their confidence in his pretensions weakened.

If, however, we adopt the view that results from the whole tenor of the first Gospel, exclusive of the first two chapters, that Jesus was only known as the son of a carpenter, and claimed no higher character; that the lineage of his father was as obscure as his calling was humble, and that this, in the mouth of his enemies or of the multitude, was a ground of objection to his recognition as the Messiah, the argument becomes intelligible and full of purpose. It answers the cavils of his adversaries from their own point of view, and by a process of reasoning, which, however inconclusive it may be to us, they could not gainsay; and it asserts a right to the higher title while repudiating all claims to the lower. It is the argument of one who believes in his own character and mission, not because he possesses the marks that were supposed to indicate the Messiah, but in spite of their admitted absence; who here, as elsewhere, protests against the narrow literal views of the traditional interpreters of the Scriptures, but who in arguing with them adopts their own mode of reasoning; not so much, indeed, to convince, as to confute them. To the people and to his disciples he is silent upon the subject. He appears to have regarded the matter as one of absolute indifference; never once referring to it with them, either by way of assertion or of apology. Only to his

enemies, and to them only on one occasion, he is represented as speaking on the subject, and then not to assert that he is the Son of David, but to shew that they were mistaken in supposing that the Messiah was to be such. It would be difficult to offer more conclusive evidence to shew that Jesus neither was, nor claimed to be, nor was believed to be, a descendant of David.¹

Connected with the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah, though less directly, is his reply when asked for the authority by which he assumes to act in that character. He has entered Jerusalem, and has cleared the courts of the Temple, and, on the following day, when the excitement has subsided, the Chief Priests and Elders challenge his authority. His answer is seemingly evasive, for he replies by asking what appears to be an irrelevant question, viz., whether the baptism of John was from Heaven or of men? The object of this question is quite intelligible. He had described John the Baptist to his disciples, and through them to the multitude, as the Elias, who had preceded himself;—the Messiah. If, therefore, the Chief Priests and Elders had acknowledged that John was divinely commissioned, Jesus would have claimed to be the coming one whom John had preached, and into whose name he had baptized his disciples. And whether they admitted or denied this claim, their prior admission with regard to John would have given Jesus an intelligible ground upon which to appeal against themselves to the people. If, on the contrary, they had spoken of John as an impostor pretending to be divinely inspired and commissioned, while, in truth, he had no higher inspiration than his mere human impulses, it would have been easy for Jesus to have excited against them the indignation of the people, and even to have made their denial of the prophetic character of John an argument in favour of his own claims.

¹ It is, of course, open to any one to argue that the speech of Jesus is intelligible on the ground that he knew himself not to be the son of Joseph, and, therefore, not the Son of David. This argument, however, apart from all other objections, leaves the bewildering and misleading effect upon the audience untouched.

For, if they were so evidently in error in the case of one whom all believed to be a prophet, did not this furnish a presumption that they were equally mistaken in his own case? Their refusal to answer the question, moreover, would supply a sufficient reason for refusing to satisfy the curiosity of men so blind to the marks of divine influence as they would thus prove themselves to be. And this was the actual result. They are represented as admitting the difficulty of the question, and professing their inability to express any opinion on the subject, and then Jesus refuses to declare to them the authority under which he acted.

There was, possibly, something in the demeanour, or tone of the questioners, that impressed upon Jesus a conviction of their fixed incredulity. Or, it may be, that the question itself was a sufficient indication of their feelings. From whatever cause, he appears to have felt the impossibility of producing any impression upon the sacerdotal class, or upon those who were satisfied with their own rules for the observance of the law. He, accordingly, contrasts their conduct and prospects with those of the most degraded and despised of the people; and he proclaims that the repentance of these latter would give them a passport to the coming Kingdom, which the elevated position and ceremonial performances of the former would fail to secure.¹

On two occasions Jesus is represented as being appealed to as a "preacher of righteousness." Once by, apparently, a sincere inquirer, with a view to practical guidance, and, again,

¹ Matt. xxi., 31, 32. It has been suggested,¹ D'Eichthal, *Les Evangiles*, I., 240, that this contrast between the Chief Priests and Scribes, and the Publicans and Harlots, is, as well as the parable that precedes it, a later interpolation, by a disciple of John the Baptist. It may be so, but surely not for the reason assigned. John had preached repentance as the condition of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, of which Jesus then claimed to be the founder and ruler. They, who had repented at the preaching of John, would, consequently, be regarded by Jesus as having had implicit faith in himself. The relative superiority of Jesus is, therefore, preserved; for though John was the instrument of calling them to repentance, they had repented in view of the Kingdom that Jesus was to found.

by one who denied or doubted his authority, for the purpose of testing his qualifications; but the answers given differ as widely as the motives of the questioners. To the Doctor of the Law, who seeks to try him, Jesus replies in the memorable sentence, so generally eulogized, but so forgotten in practice,— “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” These are the great commandments, and to them, and in so far as they enforce them, the Law and the Prophets owe their significance and value. To the young man, however, the reply is different. He is told to keep the commandments, but beyond this, in order to be perfect, to sell all that he has and give to the poor, and to follow Jesus. It is not easy to reconcile these answers, for it can hardly be suggested that the love to your neighbour commanded by the law implies that no one should possess any private property. And if it be said that this last command is a “counsel of perfection” not required of all disciples, but only in peculiar instances as an eminent exemplification of the Christian virtues of self-denial and almsgiving, this is scarcely consistent with the subsequent words of Jesus, when, upon the sorrowful departure of the young man, he treats his case as an illustration of the danger of riches, and of the difficulty that every rich man will experience in entering the Kingdom; for this would naturally be understood by the hearers to imply that similar sacrifices would be demanded of all rich men.

It may, indeed, be argued that the answer to the one question was intended to declare what was essential and permanent in the law; and to the other, to teach what was required under existing circumstances, the immediate advent of the Kingdom which Jesus was at that very time journeying to Jerusalem to establish. Viewed under this aspect, the one would enforce a lesson of universal and perpetual obligation, and the other, the duty of being prepared in the view of great emergencies to make the willing sacrifice of all that we most value; and

possibly this may be the true explanation. Still, if we accept the two accounts as literally correct, it may not be unfairly argued that Jesus had one doctrine for his foes, and another for his followers; and that he taught that beyond the performance of the common duties flowing from the principle of love to God and love to man, it is possible for a Christian to attain a higher degree of merit, to "become perfect" by the devotion of the whole of his goods to the poor, and of the whole of his life to acts of devotion; and this is the essential principle of Monachism.¹

On one occasion only do we find Jesus called upon to express an opinion with regard to the conduct to be pursued by the Jews towards their Roman rulers. This was at all times a difficult question; since it appeared as if it was necessary either to sanction disobedience to the rule of Jehovah, or to advise a hazardous and fruitless resistance to the power of Rome. To admit that it was lawful for the Jews to pay tribute to Cæsar, implied the legality of the Roman Government in contravention of the paramount claims of their covenant God. To deny its lawfulness was to impose it as a duty upon every conscientious Jew to resist by all available means the usurped authority by which it was levied. To Jesus, in the position which he had assumed, the inherent difficulty of the question might seem to

¹ It can scarcely be contested that the reply of Jesus to the young man furnishes a plausible, perhaps a valid, foundation for the assumption of the Rev. Dr. (now Father) Newman, in his "Sermons on Subjects of the Day," that "the humble monk" and "the holy nun" and other regulars, as they are called, are the only true Christians after the Scripture pattern. In describing their appearance, however, it would seem that Dr. Newman must either have drawn upon his imagination, or have only in view countries where Romanism is compelled to wear a mask. No one who has seen them in Mexico, or in South America, or in the late kingdom of the two Sicilies, would recognize a regular, whether monk or nun, in persons having "calm faces, and sweet plaintive voices, and spare frames and gentle manners," or would regard such a description as anything but a covert, and hardly covert, sarcasm. And instead of its being here that "for their meekness they meet with insult, and for their courage with cruelty," they everywhere walk with the step of authority, and receive reverence, and exercise dominion. With regard to their "purity" and "gravity" in those countries little need be said. It cannot be denied that, in these respects, they do meet with suspicion.

be increased, since, as he claimed to be the King of Zion, he would apparently be compelled either to renounce the prerogative that belonged to his office, or to furnish a valid pretext for denouncing him to the Roman functionaries as a mover of sedition. Accordingly the question was proposed to him, "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not?" and his answer, adroit but unevasive, not merely silenced his questioners, but has established a principle fruitful in consequences to Christianity, and susceptible of a wider application than it has yet received.

Some reasoners have objected that the answer of Jesus was superficial and evasive, that it was trivial to decide a question of principle by the mere circumstance—accident it might be—that the current coin had a certain image and inscription; but surely this objection is unfounded. To those who judged superficially, to the multitude in whose presence the question was asked, the answer would appear complete and conclusive. The coin is Caesar's, what objection then can there be in rendering him what is his? And to those who could look below the surface and see all that the currency of this coin implied, the answer would have a depth and force that entitle it to the admiration which it has received. The currency of the Roman coinage in Judæa as the lawful money symbolized the existence of the Roman power as an actual fact. Not merely did money circulate, but the laws were administered and authority was exercised in the name of the emperor; and this without interfering with the worship or the law of Jehovah. The answer of Jesus therefore implied, as it has been understood to imply, "there is nothing wrong in rendering obedience to the established Government in all matters within its sphere; but in matters of faith and conscience allegiance is due to God alone." While the Roman power continued, a Jew might rightly recognize its authority, and yield obedience to its laws, so that they did not conflict with the higher law of Jehovah. And the payment of tribute, and all analogous matters, were not included within this limitation. The question had no relation

to the coming of the Kingdom, for with that the Roman dominion would cease and all would be changed. Whether all this was consciously present to the mind of Jesus may be a question; but it was implicitly contained in the rule which he prescribed, and it is in complete accordance with the whole spirit of his teaching.

The discourses on the efficacy of prayer, connected with the destruction of the barren fig-tree, and the description of the judgment-scene that is to be the first act of the Son of Man when he appears in his glory, are both of very doubtful authority. As to the former, they arise out of and are dependent upon the incident related, and it is not easy to suppose that Jesus would in this manner have vented his displeasure upon a mere inanimate object because he was disappointed in an unreasonable expectation, even if we believed that the mere expression of his will could have destroyed the tree. There seems, however, no reason to doubt that the incident formed a part of the early Christian tradition, since it is found, with trifling variations, in the second Gospel. Its apparent inconsistency with the character of Jesus must have been soon felt, and hence its modification in the third Gospel, which transforms act into parable, and the fulfilled vengeance of the one into the merciful delay accompanied by measures of restoration of the other.¹ This prevents us from regarding it as an interpolation, but it is reasonable to suppose that some symbolical act or parabolic expression of Jesus, consequent upon his disappointment in not finding a more general support in Jerusalem, or in not receiving the recognition of the rulers, had in the recollection of his disciples taken this form.

The description of the judgment-scene appears clearly to have been interpolated. No other Gospel contains even a hint of any such discourse, and considering the importance of the lesson conveyed, and the magnificence of the imagery in which it is clothed, it is scarcely possible to account for

¹ Matt. xxi., 19, *et seq.*; Luke xiii., 6, *et seq.*

that omission, if the discourse had formed part of the original written Gospel, or had been preserved in the memory of the disciples as a part of the teaching of Jesus. And there are noticeable differences in the language represented as being employed by Jesus; for nowhere else in the first Gospel is he represented as speaking of himself simply as "the King," or as describing the eternal fire as prepared for the devil and his angels. If, indeed, any one should insist that the circumstance of this prediction (a parable) being now found in the first Gospel is of itself a sufficient reason for concluding that it was contained there from the first, and that consequently it formed a part of the earliest Christian tradition, it will be seen that the lesson it conveys, apart from the figurative accessories of the scene, is similar to that taught in the Sermon on the Mount, in so far as it makes the test of admission to the Kingdom to be not faith but works; but that it differs in making the only meritorious work to be kindness exhibited to the brethren. And a little reflection will then shew that such a sentiment was altogether inappropriate, in fact an anachronism, at the time at which Jesus is represented as speaking; though one that was very likely to spring up in the Church in later times, and then to have been transferred to Jesus and made the basis of a discourse attributed to him.

The parables directed against the Pharisees, and the invectives with which Jesus finally assails them, may be left out of consideration. It is necessarily uncertain to what extent we are able to rely upon their precise form, though probably they truly represent the general tone of his discourse, and particular expressions may have been faithfully preserved. They are not so much a part of the teaching of Jesus as the outburst of an indignation, righteous it might be, excited by the persistent opposition of the Pharisees to his person and doctrine, and roused to an overmastering pitch by the augmented vigour and pertinacity, and probably also by the success of their attacks. They express the intense antagonism that exists between one

who is solicitous in all things to exhibit and enforce the spirit of dogmas, and of laws, and those who are anxious, principally if not solely, to maintain an external conformity, and who would rather that men should be satisfied with creeds and ceremonies than that they should omit to profess and observe them. They are the final protest against the spirit of ritualism with which Jesus apparently feels that it is useless any longer to struggle, for they close with the mournful apostrophe to Jerusalem, which appears to intimate the abandonment of his enterprise. After this we read of no further appearances in public, and all his subsequent discourses are delivered to his disciples alone.

As the Sermon on the Mount marks the commencement of the public teaching of Jesus, so this fulmination against the Pharisees marks its close, and the difference between the tone and spirit of the two exhibits the profound revolution in his aspirations and feelings that had taken place in the interval. His convictions and his doctrines, however, remain unaltered. He still proclaims the obligation and sufficiency of the law. Still he teaches that it is the spirit and motive of the agent embodied in appropriate acts, and not the minute literal fulfilment of ceremonial prescriptions or the mere profession of a correct creed that satisfy what the law requires. Love to God, accompanying and manifesting itself by love to man, humility, meekness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, a charitable construction of actions and motives, forgiveness of injuries, obedience to the civil power in secular matters, and to God in religion, faith in God and in the power of prayer:—such appear to be the lessons taught by Jesus. And the doctrines against which he contends were not heretical, but in the highest degree orthodox. The Pharisees then taught, as almost all Christian Churches now teach, the entire and literal inspiration of the Scriptures; but they required that these Scriptures should be interpreted in accordance with the traditions of the Fathers of their Church, in the same way that every Church

now requires them to be interpreted in accordance with its own formularies, the embodiment of its traditions. This was the pretension against which Jesus contended. He did not so much contest the particular instances of misinterpretation. He only referred to them as illustrative of the practical consequences of the system. That which he opposed was the principle of closing the Scriptures against the free and unfettered investigation of every enquirer, and of making them the exclusive source and final limit of truth.¹ With him the Kingdom of Heaven was what Christianity has sometimes been most wrongly described to be,—a life not a doctrine. He never once refers to the importance of right belief; but he dwells exclusively upon the value of right feelings prompting to right actions, and he makes the actions the test and proof of the feelings. Against these lessons the Pharisees protested during his lifetime, and almost the whole Christian Church has protested since his death; and in both instances successfully. The entire history of each one of the numerous bodies into which the universal Church is divided, is a practical illustration of the lesson, that among Christians the life is nothing in comparison with the creed, and that the minutest doctrinal differences may outweigh a hundred common virtues. Christianity has triumphed, but it has been by adopting from the adversaries of Jesus the principles that he denounced, and the spirit that condemned him to the cross. Sacrifice in the place of obedience, sacramental efficacy in the place of good works, orthodoxy of creed as the test of love to God, and an intolerant zeal for conversion as the practical manifestation of love to man: such has been Christianity as exemplified in the history of the Church. And no one would more emphatically protest against its doctrines and institutions,

¹ “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you,” etc., is the spirit and almost the phraseology of modern neology. What difference there is in the form results from our altered state of feeling, which forbids any teacher to expect that his new doctrine will be received simply upon his own authority. The writer has heard preachers, while enforcing very questionable doctrine, use language identical in purport with this.

its fantastic terms of admission and its capricious exclusions, than would Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of Galilee.

We have said nothing with regard to the alleged institution of the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, since they form no part of the teaching of Jesus as we understand that term ; but they cannot be entirely passed over.

With regard to the former, we have already given reasons for supposing that it was neither practised nor sanctioned by Jesus during his lifetime. And though there appears no ground to doubt that baptism was from the first the means of admitting new members into the brotherhood formed by the Apostles after the death of Jesus, yet it seems equally certain that the neophyte was only baptized into the name of Jesus, and required to profess a belief in him. And this entitles us to discredit the statement in the first Gospel, that the rite in its existing form was appointed by Jesus himself.

In the case of the Lord's Supper, we learn from Paul that it was the distinctively Christian celebration, and that the brethren at Corinth had been taught by him that the bread was to be eaten and the wine to be drunk in memory of Jesus, and in pursuance of his injunction to the Apostles on the night of the betrayal ; and it is observable that Paul does not refer to any of those who had been present on the occasion as testifying the truth of his statement, but claims to have received it from the Lord. And this can scarcely be taken to imply anything but that his account of the institution differed from that which was ordinarily accepted. We may, therefore, infer that there was something connected with the breaking of the bread and pouring out of the wine by Jesus on the occasion of the last Passover shared with his disciples that was afterwards imitated by the brethren in their united repasts, but that the precise words ultimately attributed to Jesus were determined by dogmatic considerations.

There is nothing improbable in the circumstance that Jesus, in view of the dangers that threatened him, should have said that as he broke the bread so his body should be broken, and that as he poured out the wine so his blood should be poured out. It is, however, scarcely possible to understand what meaning the words which he is said to have actually employed could have conveyed to the Apostles. To prefigure the death he was expecting by the symbol of the broken bread and poured out wine would have been natural and appropriate. To have asserted that by the act of blessing (or giving thanks) the bread which the Apostles saw him break was transformed into another substance, and became a part of the very body whose hands had just broken it, and that the wine was similarly transformed into the blood coursing in his own veins, would have been worse than unmeaning. It would have awakened in the minds of the Apostles doubts and questions strangely at variance with the feelings suitable to the occasion, which, moreover, could scarcely have failed to have left some trace upon the narrative.

We can easily understand how language originally employed in one sense might afterwards be understood in a different one; and how the gradual development of the dogma might lead to such a modification of the words first attributed to Jesus, as would accord with the view ultimately taken of the ceremony. In the first Gospel the change from giving thanks to blessing may be traced in the manuscripts; and the earliest introduction of the practice of blessing or consecrating the "elements," which we may be sure preceded that change, could scarcely have been prior to the second Apology of Justin, since he there speaks of the Apostles in their Memorials as having described Jesus as "giving thanks," when he broke the bread and poured out the wine.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

IN all the stages of the life of Jesus through which we have hitherto accompanied him he has been a free agent, working consciously to effect some contemplated result. In the first instance, in Galilee, he appears as the preacher of the Kingdom of Heaven, afterwards in Judæa as its destined King. In the one place he exhorts his hearers by a change of mind to qualify themselves to enjoy the blessings whose coming he announced. In the other he calls upon the people by well understood symbols, if not by actual words, to assist in establishing his Kingdom. In both places, too, we find him surrounded by a body of disciples, who were at first attracted by his preaching, and afterwards expected to share his dignity. Henceforth his position is changed. He is a solitary prisoner, deserted by his followers, betrayed into the hands of the Chief Priests and Pharisees. The former were men whose authority he had contemned, and whose position he had endangered. The latter were those whose opposition had dogged every step, whose enmity he had accepted and defied, and whom he had recently exasperated beyond endurance by publicly and to their face holding them up to the execration and contempt of the people. He has to endure whatever doom their fears or their hatred may prompt. And while these occupied the foreground of the picture, the background was shadowed by the sanguinary representative of the Majesty of the Emperor.

Nothing therefore is left to Jesus but to maintain in the midst of contumely and suffering a faith in himself, in his mission, and in his Father; and to deny to his enemies the satisfaction of seeing him abandon his principles or recede from his pretensions. The supernatural aid upon which he had relied for the success of his enterprise, had not yet been vouchsafed; but this had not shaken his confidence in the reality of his claim to be King of the Jews, or in its eventual acknowledgment. It is, therefore, incumbent upon him still to assert his right to that dignity; and with this to shew himself as enduring in suffering as he had been wise in teaching and prompt in action, and to witness a good confession in the Council, at the judgment seat, and, if need be, at the place of execution; trusting the event to God in the utter absence of all human support.

It would seem, that notwithstanding the readiness with which Jesus gave himself up to the persons who were sent to apprehend him, there was some attempt at resistance on the part of his followers; and this may be taken to justify the adoption of precautions taken in order to seize him when alone with his more chosen disciples. We are told that he himself checked the attempt, probably feeling its uselessness, and not wishing to involve his friends in his own danger. And then, when the arrest was accomplished, all his companions sought safety in flight. The narrative, indeed, implies that none of them were present at any of the subsequent scenes of his life, for even Peter,—whose anxiety to learn the fate of his master led him into a position of danger, from which he only extricated himself by denying all knowledge of the prisoner,—did not penetrate beyond the outer part of the building,¹ and no one of the others is represented as having ventured to shew himself. It is possible that some of them may have mingled with the crowd that witnessed the trial of him whom they loved, which is represented as urging the reluctant Pilate to pronounce a sentence of death on him; but if so, it was as silent and unwilling spectators who dared not raise their

¹ "He sat without in the palace," Matt. xxvi., 69.

voices in opposition to the popular outcry. Probably, however, the same fears that had driven them from the side of Jesus when he was taken prisoner, kept them from venturing into the midst of his enemies when he was brought up for trial, lest in the event of their being recognized, they should, in the excitement of the moment, themselves become the victims of popular indignation. The one impulsive act of violence that sprung from the immediate sight of the peril of Jesus, was the only sign which the disciples gave of their love to his person or their faith in his character. After that, terror for the moment prevailed over every other sentiment, and they were absorbed in considerations for their own safety.

The absence of the disciples, certainly from the Council chamber,¹ and probably from the hall of judgment, necessarily throws great uncertainty over the whole account transmitted to us. We may, perhaps, accept as historical the statement that Jesus, after being arrested, was taken to the palace of Caiaphas, where an extraordinary council was sitting, before which he was brought; and that it was there decided to accuse him of sedition before the Roman Governor. And it is probable that he there asserted his claim to be the Messiah; since, otherwise, there does not appear to have been any sufficient motive for the conduct of the Chief Priests and elders in accusing him to Pilate. He had no old quarrel with them, and their action was, therefore, presumably dictated rather by political than by personal considerations. It might well be supposed that they would have been satisfied with some smaller punishment than that of death, and that, only as a last resource, would they adopt a proceeding that almost inevitably ensured its infliction. Indeed, the very attempt to find evidence upon which to convict him of any offence within

¹ It has been suggested that the particulars of the scene described might have been learned from one of the officers engaged in the proceedings, or from servants who might have been present on the occasion. What reliance, however, can be placed upon a traditional story that had originally no better foundation than the gossip of the ante-room, or the tattle of the servants' hall?

their jurisdiction appears to shew that their original intention had been to confine themselves within the limits of such a charge. And if the measures adopted against Jesus originated with themselves this is, perhaps, the more probable conclusion.

However this may be, the details of the actual scene as they are presented to us,—the disorderly condemnation,—and the coarse insults by which it was followed,—rest, necessarily, upon rumour, and the narrative, so far as these incidents are concerned, probably owes its character to the exasperated feelings of the disciples.¹ It may easily be believed that the rude and uneducated soldiers might thus treat a prisoner delivered over to them; but such conduct is consistent neither with the position of the Chief Priests and elders, nor with the natural desire which all would feel to maintain their dignity in presence of their colleagues. And such a desire would be especially felt if, as we are informed, and as is probable, some of the Doctors of the Law were admitted to take a part in the proceedings. Whatever either the Chief Priests and elders on the one hand, or the scribes on the other, might have permitted themselves to do when alone, those of each party would be afraid of lowering themselves in the others' eyes by conduct such as is described. And the same doubt rests upon the alleged attempt to suborn false testimony, and its failure. We have, in fact, no right, upon the faith of anonymous statements such as we possess, and which form our only authority, to accuse a body like the Sanhedrim of any such conduct as is attributed to them. There is incomparably greater reason for suspecting that the accounts upon which our present narratives are founded were untrustworthy, or misunderstood, than for believing that such undisguised efforts to

¹ It must be remembered that, shortly before the period at which the original of the first Gospel was probably composed, James, the brother of Jesus, and the recognized head of the Church at Jerusalem, had been slain by the Chief Priests of the day in the absence of the Roman governor.—Josephus' Antiq., Book xx., Chap. 19, Sec. 1.

frustrate the course of justice should have been made by the authorities, or that they should have exhibited conduct so undignified.

If, then, recognizing the untrustworthiness of the accounts we have received in their present form, we permit ourselves to conjecture the course of events that suggested them, we should be disposed to imagine that, upon investigation, the Council found it impossible to convict Jesus of having taught anything contrary to the law of Moses, or of anything that would have justified them in condemning him to the lighter punishments which they were authorized to impose, as had been their original intention ; that upon this they found it necessary to resort to the one offence recognized by the Romans, of which there could be no doubt that he was guilty,—that of assuming to be the King of the Jews. In support of this charge they would require no evidence ; the circumstances of the claim having been public and notorious. They might, however, question him as to his pretensions, and, if so, we may be sure that Jesus would uncompromisingly assert his title, and may believe that some such unqualified assertion of his pretensions might have provoked some vehement expression of indignation from the Chief Priest who presided. There is nothing improbable in this, and it is easy to understand how a report of such a proceeding, detailed by some of those who shared or witnessed it, might assume the shape it now possesses in the Christian legend ; still, it is quite possible that such a conjecture fits too completely all the various portions of the narrative to be accurate ; for the transforming influence of tradition rarely, if ever, operates in so simple a manner. If so, it may well be that in the absence of all reliable information as to what actually did occur, the account transmitted to us is imaginary throughout. All, therefore, that we can safely infer is that Jesus, when brought before the Council, was understood by the first disciples to have emphatically asserted his Messiahship, and to have predicted his own speedy appearance to establish the Kingdom.

A still greater improbability attaches to the conduct attributed to Pilate. It may be believed, in fact if the incident of the crucifixion is historical it may be regarded as certain, that Jesus was brought before him charged with sedition. If so, it is probable that Jesus would admit the charge, or, in other words, assert his claim to be King of the Jews. It is possible also, it being the custom to release a prisoner at the time of the feast (if, in fact, such were the custom), that Pilate might have been willing to release one who had been guilty of no actual resistance to authority, rather than one charged with the same offence who had excited a tumult in which many persons had been killed. And it is equally probable that the Jews, disappointed in the hopes which they had formed of Jesus, and angry that he should, as they believed, have deluded them into an idle demonstration in his favour, and then have yielded without an effort, should have preferred the man who had at least struck one blow for national independence. But that, in the existing state of the Jewish population, who were ready to break into insurrection at the slightest provocation, a Roman governor should have treated as a light matter,—as one, in fact, not constituting an offence,—a claim to sovereignty publicly asserted, and leading to tumultuous gathering of the people; should have confessed that he was compelled, against his will, to punish an open offender against the majesty of Rome; and should even have employed a Jewish symbol to denote his repudiation of the consequences of the act forced upon him, is utterly incredible. It would be far more consistent with probability to assume that the whole proceeding emanated from Pilate himself, and that the only part played by the Chief Priests and Elders was that of seizing the person of the prisoner, in order that by delivering him up they might escape all suspicion of complicity with his proceedings.

The agents of Roman authority could scarcely have left Pilate ignorant of the appearance of a new pretender to the throne of Judæa, and of his intended movements so far as they

could be foreseen. He must have known all the circumstances attending the public entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and we may be assured that he would have taken precautions to repress any attempted rising of the people. The subsequent conduct of Jesus might, no doubt, have tended to allay his apprehensions. Still, he could not but feel that in the known temper of the multitude, gathered together to celebrate one of their great national festivals, and, therefore, in a state of patriotic and religious fervour, there could be no security against an outbreak, but in the arrest of the pretender. Under these circumstances, it would be a natural and obvious proceeding, on his part, to intimate to the Jewish rulers that they would be held responsible if the person of Jesus were not secured. Pilate would have been answerable to the emperor if any rising had taken place that he could have prevented, and he was not likely to have enquired very minutely into the ulterior purposes of any one who claimed an authority ostensibly incompatible with that of Rome, whether the end designed should be effected by warlike or peaceful measures. His policy was that of repression by any means, and at all hazards. And with the indifference to human life and to human suffering, characteristic of the individual¹ and of the age, he was not likely to have troubled himself to arrest the course of justice, or to avert the fate of a single pretender guilty, upon his own confession, of an offence affecting the rights of the emperor.

Nor is it more probable that, in the course which he adopted, he was in any degree influenced by popular clamour. The very promptitude of his procedure,—execution following immediately after condemnation, and the trial succeeding the arrest at the earliest possible moment,—repels any such sug-

¹ The character of Pilate has been transformed in the Christian legend, much in the same manner as that of Charlemagne, in the "Carlovingian Epics," and of Attila, in the "Nibelungen Lied." In the pages of Josephus he appears as an unscrupulous and sanguinary ruler, without remorse or pity.

gestion, and shews that Pilate was, at least, no reluctant actor in the scene. Had he been so, there would have been no difficulty in finding excuses for a few days' delay. And if he were convinced of the innocence of Jesus he could have had no fears of the representations of the Jews upon the subject. In fact, the very vehemence with which they demanded the execution of the prisoner would be a reason for acquitting him of any serious designs; for the Jews were not so loyal that their zeal upon such a subject was above suspicion. Their accusations of treason would rather furnish presumptions in favour of the accused, and suggest that he had provoked their hostility by refusing to aid in their projects. And Pilate had been sufficiently prompt and unsparing in his measures to prevent and to punish insurrection to free him from all fear of being suspected of remissness because he had discharged a solitary prisoner, accused of sedition, after a public judicial investigation of the charge. Everything, therefore, confirms the conclusion that the conduct of Pilate was, throughout, voluntary and self-determined.

We are not, indeed, on that account justified in concluding that the action of the Chief Priests and Elders was influenced by his commands; but we must believe,—unless we reject as legendary the account of the public entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as King of the Jews,—that Pilate was informed of that proceeding and had taken measures for the effectual repression of any outbreak, and that the Jewish rulers were aware of these precautions, and dreaded their possible results. We see, therefore, that the latter had a motive for their action against Jesus, independently of any personal enmities; and the former a duty cast upon him of preserving the public tranquillity, and of punishing the pretender by whom it had apparently been threatened. And this, at least, was a duty he was not likely to neglect.

Our only account of these transactions is contained in the four Gospels, with whose language we have been familiar

from childhood, and have been taught to receive with implicit faith. We have, consequently, been so accustomed to regard the whole proceeding from the evangelists' point of view, that we are apt to forget altogether that there is another point of view from which it would be necessarily regarded by the Roman and Jewish actors in the scene,—looked at from which it would appear in a very different light. We have been taught to conceive of Jesus as the Son of God,—divinely commissioned—himself even divine; working miracles that “no man had wrought;” “speaking as never man spake;” “holy, harmless, undefiled;” “the Saviour of sinners,” who took upon himself their burthens, and died for their sins; peaceable himself and preaching peace to others. The conduct of his adversaries, consequently, appears not only without excuse, but almost without motive; to have sprung, indeed, from the mere antagonism between evil and good, light and darkness; and to exhibit the envy and hatred of conscious wickedness towards the good man by whose acts it is shamed and by whose doctrines it is exposed. And this is a feeling which it is almost impossible entirely to eradicate, and, even if formally dismissed, continues unconsciously to colour our conclusions upon the subject.

If, then, we place ourselves, in thought, outside of the circle of these ideas, as, in justice, we are bound to do, we see at once the different aspect in which Jesus must have been regarded by the rulers in Jerusalem. The son of a carpenter;—probably, at one time, a carpenter himself;—he appears at first in Galilee as a preacher of the coming Kingdom;—of those doctrines which, in the mouths of other persons, had excited such disastrous tumults. He continues the preaching of John, the effects of which had just before furnished Herod with a pretext for seizing and beheading him, if they were not, as Josephus informs us, the actual motive for the proceeding. Possibly the Chief Priests might have heard that Jesus had taught lessons of justice and morality of a

very elevated character. In that case they must also have heard that he excited the people against their religious guides; that he set at nought the ceremonial observances prescribed by the Doctors of the Law; and derided those who observed and those who enforced them. And though they might secretly enjoy the discomfiture of their opponents they would, nevertheless, feel the dangerous character of the spirit displayed by their assailant. In Galilee he continues until a longer residence there has become unsafe, when he retires beyond the Jewish territory, to seek a refuge among the Gentiles. From this retirement he suddenly returns, and almost immediately after enters Judæa in a new character. He is no longer the herald of the Kingdom, but claims to be its predicted king. In this character he obtains numerous adherents, and he enters Jerusalem surrounded by a tumultuous crowd, who recognize and support his claim. He takes advantage of the impression produced by the number and apparent zeal of his followers to exercise authority in the Temple. It is true that no attempt is made to support his pretensions by an appeal to arms, but he continues to assert his claim, and daily makes his public appearance in the city surrounded by a body of disciples who hope for promotion in his Kingdom, and appear to be ready to execute whatever he may command. On the one hand was the multitude, always impressionable on the side of national independence, and on the other Pilate, who had, on more than one occasion, made a popular tumult the excuse for indiscriminate slaughter. And Jesus, while claiming to be the Messiah, had shown no sign, and had performed no miracle in Jerusalem to authenticate his mission.¹ He had not even taught the lessons that characterized his early teach-

¹ It is true that we read, Matt. xxi., 14, "And the blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them," but this is one of the stereotyped phrases, from which we are at liberty to conclude the very contrary of what they seemingly assert. If the writer of the first Gospel had known of any specific instance of miraculous healing in the Temple in the presence of the Chief Priests, he would certainly have related it.

ing in Galilee. And, besides this, he had endeavoured, by parable, by insinuation, and by direct invective, to excite the people against the Chief Priests and Elders, as well as against his ancient enemies—the Pharisees. And no one could foresee the consequences which the assertion of his pretensions might ultimately produce, if he were allowed to remain at large during the continuance of the feast.

These things were all that the Jewish rulers saw or could see. They had no spiritual intuitions to enable them to recognize under these lowly forms the intrinsic moral superiority of Jesus, or the essentially peaceful means by which he hoped to realize his anticipated dominion; and no prophetic insight to shew them the picture of the future. They could not foresee the belief of the disciples of Jesus in his resurrection, and the transference to his second coming of the hopes that the first coming had failed to accomplish. They could not imagine the figure of Saul, the Jewish zealot, becoming changed into that of Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, everywhere proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and offering an entrance promiscuously to all comers. Had they recognized the real character of Jesus they would have known that his death was not necessary to their safety. Had they foreseen the belief in his resurrection they would have known that his death would be the means of accomplishing, in a new field and in a different form, all that his life had failed to effect, and that the occasion of their apparent triumph was, in truth, the furtherance of the cause which they sought to crush. But they could only act according to their means of information and their foresight of consequences, and it is not easy to say how they could have acted differently. No one can be held to be morally guilty, though he may be, in some sense, responsible, because he is ignorant of circumstances which he has no means of knowing, or is unable to anticipate all the consequences actually involved in his acts. The Chief Priests, no doubt, feared the people, not merely lest they should at-

tempt to rescue Jesus if he were publicly seized, but lest they should rise in his favour if he were permitted to be at large; and they must have feared the Romans also. Against these fears they had nothing to set; for even had they been satisfied that Jesus would not himself originate any movement, they might still fear lest the populace should take him by force and make him a king. And, apart from any such fear, his pretensions were a standing menace to the Roman authority, and a constant source of danger to themselves.

Under such circumstances it would be impossible for them to remain passive. How much of the proceedings actually adopted was due to their own voluntary action, and how much to the conduct or even to the commands of Pilate, it is impossible now to determine. It may be that Jesus was delivered up voluntarily, in order to procure his death; or that their first intention having been to try him for some offence against their law, which involved a punishment short of death, they felt, after his open claim of kingship, that they had no alternative but to deliver him up to the Roman authorities, in order to escape the suspicion of complicity or concealment; or, it may be, they were acting throughout under Roman dictation. All that we can certainly say is, that having been apparently seized by their order and brought before their tribunal, the Chief Priests and Elders delivered Jesus up to Pilate as an offender against Rome, and that, as such, he was condemned to death by crucifixion.

The scene that is related as having followed his condemnation is so much in accordance with the natural course of events that we need feel no difficulty in accepting it as substantially true. Soldiers in a conquered country, where their presence is regarded as a wrong and an insult, and where the feelings of hatred, of which they are the objects, break forth upon every occasion, may be expected to return hate for hate, and contempt for contempt; and not merely to manifest these sentiments whenever opportunity offers, but to treat with especial in-

dignity any one who resists or threatens the authority which they represent. The French troops in Prussia, during its occupation by Napoleon, and the Russian troops in Poland, within the last few years, afforded abundant illustration of these feelings and of this conduct; and we need not go so far for other instances. Our own troops in Ireland, during the rebellion of '98, and in India, during the sepoy mutiny, acted in a precisely similar spirit, and with scarcely less violence and coarseness. The instances were numerous in which men, regarded by their countrymen as heroes and martyrs, were made to suffer the lowest indignities—partly in the very wantonness of insult, and partly as a lesson to others, and in order to mark strongly the contrast between their pretensions and their success. And there was nothing to prevent the exhibition of these feelings in the case of Jesus. The legionaries represented the Majesty of Rome; their presence in Jerusalem at once symbolized and enforced the subjugation of Judæa. Who then was he who, in open defiance to them, pretended to be the King of the Jews? They would, at least, shew him, and his supporters too, if he had any, at what value they rated his pretensions, and those of all similar claimants!

Such we may believe to have been the feelings that prompted the treatment that Jesus experienced;—the elaborate mockery of royalty and the degrading indignities by which it was accompanied. Disgraceful as the scene undoubtedly was, it is too much in accordance with experience to awaken any feelings of surprise or doubt. To the soldiers certainly, if to no one else, Jesus was merely a Jewish pretender, who had, for the moment, succeeded in persuading the populace that he was what he claimed to be, but who had been seized before he had been able to mature his plans or to organize any movement that could be formidable. They had no acquaintance with psalm or prophecy to lead them to attach any more importance to his claim than to that of any other of the numerous leaders of insurrection whose risings they had been called upon to quell. Probably

they had never even heard of his name until they had been under arms on the occasion of the gathering of the people who welcomed his entry into Jerusalem. He was an unsuccessful rebel, claiming, by virtue of some unknown or unintelligible title, to have a right to the Kingdom of Judæa, but lacking either the means to impart to his enterprise any prospect of success, or the courage to employ them.

It appears impossible to understand the scene, or to render justice to the actors, unless, at least, we thus attempt to view it from the Jewish and Roman points of view. In doing this we claim nothing more than the ability to understand in what manner certain events are likely to affect the conduct of individuals who occupy a given position in relation to them. Whether they are Chief Priests and Elders at Jerusalem, or a Christian council at Nikœa or Chalcedon, or a Roman Catholic council at Constance, or a synod at Dort, or a convocation in England, or a general assembly in Scotland, or, in fact, a body of theologians anywhere; every one who opposes himself to the opinions of the majority is likely to receive but scant justice at their hands. And so whether it is a Roman procurator in Judæa, or a lord-lieutenant in Ireland, or a government resident in India, or a Russian prince in Poland, or an Austrian commandant in Italy, or a French marshal in Algeria, or a Federal general in New Orleans, the treatment of a rebel is likely to be very much the same, unless in so far as the effect of public opinion may modify it. And when it happens that the two characters of heretic and rebel are combined in the same person, so that political fears are added to theological animosities, it is obvious that the combination of the two sentiments only renders more certain the fate of the man who has aroused both against himself. Let any one, for instance, imagine a supposed descendant of the ancient Irish kings traversing Ireland at the present day, denouncing the Romish faith and ritual in the name of the most elevated morality—that, in fact, of the Sermon on the

Mount,—believed by the credulous populace to be possessed of supernatural power, and professing to have come to restore the national independence and to establish the kingdom of the Irish in Ireland ; and in realizing the feelings with which such a person would be regarded by the Romish hierarchy and the English government, he may understand the feelings entertained towards Jesus by the Jewish rulers and the Roman governor. And the position of Ireland, at the present time, possesses enough resemblance to that of Judæa during the public ministry of Jesus, to make the one a sufficiently accurate type of the other for our present purpose.

In many of the cases that we have above supposed our sympathies would be enlisted on the side of the sufferer. We feel that he has a right to the free expression of his opinions, and that he is justified in making an effort to assert or to regain national independence. And, probably, we shall be right; for truth and freedom are realities at which a man may worthily aim, and to whose attainment and diffusion his life may well be devoted. But if we would be just we must admit that persons are not always responsible for the system which they administer, and that a mistaken sense of duty will often lead humane men to acts of cruelty, from which under any lower motive they would shrink.¹ And there is something in the relation between an ecclesiastical corporation and a reformer, and between the agent of a foreign power and the subjugated people that he governs, which appears to impart peculiar bitterness to the quarrels that arise between them. While, there-

¹ Father Newman, in his "Apologia," while apparently vindicating the theoretical necessity of burning heretics, expresses, no doubt very sincerely, his own repugnance to share or even to witness such a proceeding. And yet, were he placed in the circumstances in which Dominic, or Torquemada, or Gardiner, or Alva were placed, he might consider this repugnance as a culpable weakness of the flesh, which it was his duty to subdue, and might be led by a reaction against his natural tendencies to do or sanction as much as had been done or authorized by any. It would not be the first instance by hundreds of an originally humane man becoming, from a sense of religious obligation, a remorseless persecutor. Claverhouse, if we may believe Sir Walter Scott, could not at first see blood without shuddering,—but he shed enough at last.

fore, in this case, our sympathies are entirely with Jesus, we do not regard those who procured or pronounced his condemnation as out of the pale of humanity, or as having done anything which the most vehement of their denouncers might not have themselves done under similar circumstances. We recognize the purity of the motives, the elevation of the principles, and the blamelessness of the conduct of Jesus; but we recognize also the impossibility of his opponents regarding his conduct in the same light as ourselves. His case is one of the numerous instances in which an innocent man has been condemned to death, because circumstances placed it beyond the power of his judges to perceive his innocence.

The details of the crucifixion, like those of the judgment, are necessarily doubtful. According to the first two Gospels none of the disciples were present; only the women who had accompanied him from Galilee witnessed the scene from a distance;—"They stood afar off beholding."¹ They would, consequently, neither hear the mournful exclamation attributed to Jesus, nor the words of the centurion, nor the derisive speeches of the mob, nor the revilings of the thieves. It is possible that the despairing cry,—“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani,” which is said to have been understood by the bystanders as though he were calling on Elias, may have been uttered,—for such a mistake might have directed attention to the words, and have caused them to be preserved. But if, in reality, any such idea as that he called upon Elias were formed at the time, it is quite as possible that the imagination of the disciples having this basis to work upon, might have furnished the words by applying to the occasion the verse of a psalm which appeared appropriate. We can say no more than that he died alone and unsupported, save by his own inward conviction, and by his consciousness of the presence of God.

The portents that are related in the first Gospel to have

¹ The third Gospel only so far modifies this statement as to make all the acquaintances of Jesus “stand afar off,” as well as the women, Luke xxiii. 49.

accompanied the crucifixion are obviously unhistorical. The darkness that covered the land; the rending of the veil of the Temple; the earthquake; the graves yielding up their dead: all bear upon their face the character of legend. It is not difficult to understand how they should have arisen, for ancient story records many similar cases in which nature was thus supposed to sympathize with the death of some illustrious sufferer. It is, of course, possible that there might have been an earthquake, such as is described, shattering the rocks, rending the veil of the Temple, and casting dead bodies out of the graves in which they had been newly placed; and accompanied by exhalations that darkened the atmosphere. But this is, in fact, contradicted by the tenor of the narrative, in which all things are represented as proceeding in their ordinary course. Such an earthquake would have levelled the Temple itself and half of the city, and no one, save, perhaps, the military guard, whom discipline might have retained at their posts, would have had any other thought but that of self-preservation. Nothing of the kind is, however, related. And in the evening a disciple,—Joseph of Arimathea,—who only now appears upon the stage, never being mentioned either before or subsequently, is reported to have obtained from Pilate permission to take down the body of Jesus for the purpose of burial.

It is singular, no doubt, that at this precise moment, a person not before heard of, should appear upon the scene to claim and to inter the body of Jesus in the absence of all the disciples who had accompanied him from Galilee, and by whom he was ordinarily surrounded.¹ That at this moment any one should have had courage to shew such interest in the pretender whom Pilate had that day sentenced to death, risking the suspicion

¹ This is distinctly implied in every one of the Synoptical Gospels, where the burial is attributed to Joseph alone, and the women merely mark the place where the body is laid, Matt. xxvii., 60, 61, Mark xx., 46, 47, Luke xxi., 53-55. It would seem that all the writers understood that the place of burial would have been unknown to the disciples, had not the women followed the body from the cross and witnessed its interment.

that might thus attach to himself, argues an amount of resolution and of conscious influence, hardly compatible with his previous and subsequent insignificance. And that his request should have been complied with is scarcely consistent with the character and position of Pilate, who was certainly not of a temper to accord an unwonted favor to a Jew, who, by his very application, exposed himself to the suspicion of being a supporter of sedition. It is noticeable, too, that only the two Marys—Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Matt. xxvii., 61, Mary, the mother of Joses; Mark xx. 47)—are represented as seeing where the body was laid. None of the disciples even knew of the burial save from their report, and none of them ever saw the body of the dead Jesus, or, so far as appears from the first two Gospels, ever saw the place of sepulture. And what adds to the singularity, neither Mary of Magdala, nor the other Mary, are ever referred to before the crucifixion, nor after they had reported the resurrection. Joseph and the two Marys thus appear upon the scene for a particular purpose. The first is the instrument of burying the body; the two last are the sole witnesses of the crucifixion and the resurrection, and they see where the body is laid. And having answered this purpose, they disappear from the narrative as suddenly as they had been introduced.

There is no intrinsic improbability in the statement that women formed a part of the body of disciples by whom Jesus was accompanied from Galilee. And if such were the case, it would be natural that they should seek some spot on the outskirts of the crowd, whence they might witness the last moments of him whom they had loved and revered, and that they should have refused to leave the place so long as the body remained on the cross,¹ and that, if the body were taken down for burial, they should have followed it and have sat “over against” the tomb in which it was placed, and, as a matter of

¹ Like Rizpah, watching the bodies of the children offered as a sacrifice to Jehovah.

course, they would tell the disciples all they had seen. In tradition, that which is probable is not always true, and not a few stories, for which there is very small basis of fact, obtain an easy credence, because they coincide with what is conceived to be natural.

The whole account, obviously, depends upon the alleged fact that the body of Jesus was allowed by Pilate to be taken down from the cross at the request of Joseph of Arimathæa, who buried it in a new tomb which he had caused to be hewn out for himself. And it cannot be denied that the evidence for this is, to say the least, inconclusive. The only ground for supposing that such a person as Joseph ever existed, is his opportune appearance in the narrative at this juncture, to do that which the recognized disciples of Jesus shrunk from doing; by this act avowing himself to the Roman authorities and the Jewish Sanhedrim a follower of the man whom the one had crucified as a rebel and the others had rejected as an impostor. And having performed this act of zeal and devotion,—an act which, taken in conjunction with his wealth and with his social position, which, evidenced by the attention paid to his request by Pilate, could not, we might suppose, fail to secure him a prominent position in the company of disciples,—he drops altogether out of the history, and only reappears in later legend as the author of apocryphal epistles and the hero of a fabulous mission.¹ The circumstance, too, that he should have a new tomb, near to the place of execution, which had never been used, is one of the coincidences that are found more frequently in legendary narratives than in sober history. In this he is described as depositing the body, decently wrapped in a linen cloth, and there leaving it, without, so far as appears, ever troubling himself to inquire as to its subsequent fate. And, what is still more inexplicable, it is obvious that he is

¹ He is described as having been a missionary to Britain, and to have founded Churches there, to which he addressed Epistles. But the legend sprung up at an unknown date; certainly after the eighth century.

not one of those to whom the fact of the resurrection is directed to be communicated. The disciples to whom, according to the first Gospel, the women were directed to convey the intelligence were the eleven, who, in obedience to the message, departed for Galilee. There is no suggestion of any recognition by Jesus, or by the women, or by the disciples, of the noble act which, in defiance of danger and obloquy, had prevented the body of Jesus from being exposed to the indignities to which the bodies of those who died upon the cross were usually subjected, and secured for it an honourable burial.

It often happens that what is improbable may, nevertheless, be true, in the same manner that what is probable may be false. We have, therefore, no right to reject a statement resting upon competent evidence merely on account of its antecedent improbability. What, however, is the evidence in this case? A narrative based upon tradition, compiled many years after the event, and many years, apparently, after the two Marys and Joseph of Arimathaea had disappeared from the scene, when, consequently, there were no means of testing its truth. It is not merely improbable, but so far from being fully supported by, it is scarcely consistent with the subsequent narrative. And in the part in which it is supported,—the body being laid in a tomb,—this is so closely connected with the application of the Chief Priests and Elders to Pilate, and with the reasons which they assign, and the precautions which they are reported to have taken (which are certainly unhistorical), that it is difficult not to suppose the circumstance or the details of the interment to have been originally suggested by the taunts of the unbelieving Jews. It was a ready answer on their part to an assertion of the resurrection of Jesus,—“ You took possession of his body before he was dead, and it is not wonderful, therefore, you should have been able to exhibit him alive to selected witnesses.” To supply an adequate reply to this objection it was necessary that the body of Jesus should have been buried by one who was not an avowed disciple, as this furnished the

means of taking what might appear to be adequate precautions, which it would then be assumed were actually taken. On the whole, we rather incline to the opinion that the body of Jesus was not buried, and we may confidently affirm that there is no sufficient evidence that it was. At the same time, the early belief in the fact of the burial is shewn by the writings of Paul, a quarter of a century after the death of Jesus.

The question of the resurrection is one of the unsolved and, presumably, insoluble enigmas of history. No adequate explanation of the belief has ever been suggested, and it is not probable that any ever will be.¹ For, in order to know what would be such, it is necessary to be able to realize for ourselves the state of opinion and feeling among the Apostles at the time. If able to do this, we should probably find no difficulty in understanding how some, to us, trivial circumstance, fully susceptible of a rational explanation, had produced the belief in their minds. Just, in fact, as we can understand how the story of the greased cartridges, in spite of evidence offered to the contrary, was believed by the Sepoys, and became the immediate cause of the Indian Mutiny. Could we even be sure that Jesus was actually seen alive by the Apostles after his crucifixion, that would naturally have been to them a proof that he had not died. His presence among them as a living man—eating and drinking, and capable of being seen and felt—would have made them at once aware that their belief in his death had been ill-founded, and they would have been assured, not of his resurrection, but that, by some accident or miracle, he had been saved from death; and such would be the inevitable conclusion now. The instances are numerous and well au-

¹ An orthodox critic might object that the actual appearance of the risen Jesus was such an explanation. Obviously, however, it is not. The last thing that would occur to a sane person, if he saw living one whom he believed to have died, and whom he had even seen buried, would be that he had been actually raised from the dead.

thenticated of persons who have suffered far more than Jesus is represented to have suffered, at least in the first Gospel; persons who have been pierced with wounds apparently mortal, and have been cast into trenches as dead, or who have been buried as dead, but who have, nevertheless, recovered, and whose recovery has been accepted as conclusive and incontrovertible proof that they had not died. And, however apparently unmistakable the appearances of death might be, we should, if we afterwards saw the seemingly dead man alive, be sure that we had been mistaken in relying upon them ; or, if this were impossible, as, for instance, if the man had been guillotined in our sight, we should at once be equally certain that the person assuming his name and claiming his rights was an impostor.¹

The validity of this reasoning would now be admitted by all orthodox Protestants to be conclusive, excepting in the cases of resuscitation recorded in the Bible. Subject to this exception they would allow that the rule was universal and immutable, extending throughout the whole human race from the first moment of its existence to the present time. And all logical reasoners admit that the evidence to prove such a fact as the resuscitation of a dead man should be of more than ordinary weight, though they may demur to the conditions required by M. Renan, that it should be accessible alike to the sceptic and to the believer, and of a nature to allow of analysis and

¹ The very word "death," in fact, is always used as implying the impossibility of revivification. So long as this possibility remains, we do not speak of a person as dead. We speak of a death-like trance ; a trance that may end in death ; a state of asphyxia that may produce death, etc. ; and these states may be indistinguishable from death, so far as sensible physical phenomena are concerned. The distinction between these various states and death is that in the latter recovery is no longer possible. These are, in fact, the *differentia* of death. No evidence of the actual occurrence of death can outweigh, we should rather say can balance, for one instant, the contrary inference furnished by the fact of the seemingly dead man having afterwards been seen alive. The answer, consequently, to those who insist upon the reality of the bodily appearances of Jesus after his crucifixion as a sufficient proof of the resurrection, is that these appearances, on the contrary, prove incontestibly that he had never died. The proof relied upon, if valid, excludes the inference attempted to be drawn from it. The belief is, therefore, a pure result of that faith which, in the words of Charles Wesley, "laughs at impossibilities, and says it 'has been' done."

verification. What, however, is the case with regard to the instances included in the exception upon which they insist? Passing over those contained in the Old Testament, which rest upon statements composed centuries after the events, and waiving, for the moment, all question as to the resurrection of Jesus; three cases,—those of the widow's son, of Dorcas, and of Eutychus, rest upon the sole authority of anonymous compilations; viz., the third Gospel and the Acts, composed certainly out of Judæa;—one, that of Lazarus, upon an account supposed to have been written at Ephesus; one, that of the saints, who came out of their graves at the crucifixion, upon the sole authority of the first Gospel; and one, that of the ruler's daughter, even if accepted as true, suggests, upon the face of it, that the patient was, as Jesus declared, "not dead" at the time. No one who considers the alleged character of these acts can say that the evidence is sufficient of itself, in any one of these cases, to outweigh the improbability, or even a far less degree of improbability. He may still believe them to have been performed; but not upon the evidence taken by itself. His belief will either be a pure act of faith, or will be founded upon considerations drawn from the opinion which he entertains of the probability that wonders of this or of a corresponding character should be displayed in order to accredit a divine messenger, one commissioned to proclaim a new revelation.¹ That he does not really believe them upon the evidence is shewn by the circumstance that, if an equal or far higher amount of evidence were offered in support of a modern Christian miracle, or of a miracle wrought by one of the gods of the heathen, he would reject it at once. And he would, if possible, reject it the more readily if such stupendous events were related, as

¹ The argument in support of this, in most instances, substantially assumes something of this form. "If I had been God I should, under the circumstances, have wrought such miracles, and, therefore, I believe that God did." For a striking illustration of this style of reasoning, see Candlish's "Reason and Revelation," *passim*. It is not easy to imagine anything more essentially irreverent than the tone in which such writers discuss these topics.

they are in the New Testament, without an expression of surprise on the part of the writer or of incredulity on the part of the spectators; just, in fact, as though the one were describing, and the others had witnessed, an event extraordinary indeed, but still to be expected. For such a narrative would shew the credulous and uninvestigating spirit in which the writers received and recorded the incident.

It may be argued, fairly enough, that, even admitting the justness of these comments upon the character of the evidence, they do not, at any rate, apply to the resurrection of Jesus, because that is supported, not only by the writers who record it, but by the incomparably stronger evidence afforded by the belief of those who were eye-witnesses of the fact. But this argument partly proceeds upon a misapprehension. The belief of the Apostles in the resurrection had two elements; one a belief that Jesus had died upon the cross, and the other a belief that they, or some one on whom they relied, had seen him alive afterwards. If, indeed, the latter belief were well founded, then we should be compelled to assume that they were mistaken in the former, and that Jesus had not died as was supposed. It is very easy to understand that they might have been so mistaken, if, as all the earlier Gospels imply, none of them were near the cross.¹ And in spite of the ridicule that has been heaped upon the suggestion, it is incomparably more probable that, when the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross, some secret or avowed disciple, upon finding indications of life, should have succeeded in restoring animation, and have afterwards concealed him, permitting one or more interviews with the other disciples, than that, having naturally died, he should have been restored to life. There are, certainly, stronger grounds for supposing that deception was practised than that such a miracle was wrought. It does not, however, appear to us probable that such was the

¹ This enables us to understand the modifications that the history of the crucifixion has received in the fourth Gospel; the presence of the beloved disciple, and the thrust of the spear, which was supposed to have touched the heart.

case, though there are points in the narrative that suggest it. The impression produced by a careful review of the whole evidence is, that Jesus really died, and that some unknown circumstances, acting upon the excited minds of the Apostles, produced the belief in his resurrection.¹

What these circumstances were it appears to us impossible now to suggest with any degree of plausibility. If there exist any original account of the transaction, it is that contained either in the last chapter of the first Gospel, or in the first eight verses of the last chapter of the second; for we may be quite certain that the remainder of that latter chapter did not originally form part of the Gospel. The third Gospel is professedly the work of one who has obtained his information at second hand, and the last may be left entirely out of consideration.² In the first two Gospels the announcement of the resurrection of Jesus is described as having been made to the two Marys,—in the one case by an angel, and in the other by a young man clothed in white; and then, in the first Gospel, they are said to have seen and recognized and even to have touched Jesus, by whom they are charged with a message to

¹ A very plausible case might, however, be made out for the theory that Jesus, in his journey to Jerusalem, was, to a certain extent, an instrument in the hands of others who hoped to avail themselves of his popularity in order to bring about a religious or political revolution. The very determination to visit Jerusalem seeming to imply a reliance upon promised support, and the manner of his entry into the city seeming to suggest concert and preparation on the part of adherents within. The sudden appearance, too, of Joseph of Arimathaea, just to receive him from the cross; the new tomb hewn out in the neighbourhood of the place of crucifixion; the circumstance that some one was left at the tomb to announce the rising, and to direct the disciples to Galilee; the one interview with the Apostles, and the subsequent disappearance of Jesus, lend a colour to such an idea. There are other circumstances, too, apparently pointing in the same direction. And this would account for the Apostles being themselves deceived, and for the absence of all previous or subsequent notice of Joseph of Arimathaea.

² The accounts of the appearances of Jesus, in the last two Gospels, are inconsistent with each other and with that contained in the first Gospel, and, obviously, mark a later stage in the “development” of the legend. With what rapidity this development might occur, is shewn by the difference between the last chapter of the third Gospel and the first chapter of “The Acts;”—both presumably by the same author, and written within a few years of each other.

the brethren. And this is all that is described as taking place in Jerusalem.

There are strong grounds for believing that this also was all that was originally contained in the first Gospel. The concluding interview in Galilee is known to no other writer,¹ and the command there given by Jesus was, so far as appears, disregarded by the Apostles. They did not go and make disciples of all Gentiles by baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,² for they vehemently resisted the admission of Gentiles into the Church, excepting on the condition that they should be circumcised ;—and they baptized converts into the name of Jesus only.³ And instead of teaching the disciples to obey all that Jesus had commanded (whatever that might be), they taught them, as the only condition of fitness for being initiated into the society, to believe in Jesus himself as risen from the dead. Even if we were to admit that this did form part of the original Gospel, then the only appearance to the disciples is represented as having been made to the eleven alone in Galilee. No appearance in Jerusalem is known to the writer,—though the work was originally composed in that city from the traditions there current. The whole belief in the resurrection rested, apparently, in the first instance upon the report of the two Marys of what they had been told, or of what they believed themselves to have seen. When, however, it was once formed, we see in the instance of Paul how a subjective impression might be transformed by the imagination

¹ The attempt to identify it with the appearance to the five hundred mentioned by Paul, is one of those desperate expedients to which orthodox commentators are occasionally driven. It is quite clear that none but the eleven are referred to in the first Gospel. And on the supposition that five hundred were really present, how is it that no other evangelist refers to what would then be the most noteworthy of all the appearances of Jesus, and that the first leaves out of his account the very circumstance to which the event owed its chief importance ?

² This formula, of itself, shews that the passage in which it occurs could not have been written before the close of the second century.

³ Acts ii., 38; 1 Cor. i., 13, and many other passages. There is nowhere throughout the New Testament any suggestion that this form, given in the first Gospel, was one used in baptism.

into an actual outward appearance, and can, therefore, to some extent, account for the reports which were subsequently circulated as to the various appearances that Jesus had vouchsafed to his disciples.

Still, it may be urged that this conclusion is not reconcilable with the statements of Paul, whose veracity is above suspicion, and the soundness of whose judgment cannot be disputed. That Paul was eminently a truthful man can scarcely be doubted by any one who reads his Epistles; but whether, in a matter like the present, he can be relied upon as having examined into the evidence for the accounts that had reached him is, at least, questionable. Or rather we might say that the very depths of his own conviction, founded upon the appearance of Jesus to himself, would render him ready to receive, as a matter of course, and without investigation, any statements of similar appearances to others. The last thing, in fact, that would have suggested itself to his mind would have been to cross-examine one of the brethren who had told him of another appearance of the risen Jesus in addition to those of which he had previously heard.

And, in this respect, there appears to be a great misconception with regard to the character of Paul. That he was truthful, sagacious, far-seeing, with a clear practical sense and a profound moral insight, appears undoubted; but these qualities are often found in actual life to be associated in the same individual with the readiest credulity upon all matters that fall in with his preconceptions. Few men, for instance, had more practical sagacity or a sounder moral feeling than Luther, and yet he believed in the actual bodily temptation of the devil. John Wesley, again, was a man of the highest order of common sense,—prudent, methodical, business-like,—and he believed in omens, ghosts, and witches. A modern professor is understood to believe that he has seen a man floating in the air without material support, though in a very dim light.¹

¹ Even the author of the “Eclipse of Faith,” acute and sceptical as he is, appears to

And Paul, while regulating the internal affairs of the Churches which he had founded, and fighting everywhere, and at all times, the great battle of Christian freedom, was little inclined either to analyze the sources of his own conceptions or to require a strictly logical or evidential process as the condition of belief in himself and others. On the contrary, he would have considered such a requirement, as probably it would have been, a proof of the want of faith.

The reasoning of Paul in the chapter that contains his statement of the various appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, is a sufficient illustration of his mental character ; for though we may receive his doctrines as inspired, and, therefore, proved to be true by the inspiration that dictated them,—no one, probably, would suggest that they are proved by the arguments which he employs. And so with his enumeration of the appearances of Jesus. No doubt it is made in good faith, but it shews only the floating rumours of the Church outside of Jerusalem, and certainly does not imply any investigation on the part of Paul. There is no reference to the appearance to the Marys ; none to that to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. And there is a mention of an appearance to five hundred at once, and of one to James, which were unknown to the writers from whom the compiler of the third Gospel drew his narrative, and which, though he was acquainted with the Epistle in question,¹ could not be made to fit into it. In fact, they appear to be outside of the Christian tradition, for, except in the passage in question,

believe that two-and-a-half millions of persons quenched their thirst at a single well,—Marah ;—at which it would be impossible, with all the appliances of pumps and troughs, to water fifty thousand sheep. This belief is the more extraordinary, because a little of the arithmetic which he ridicules in the Bishop of Natal would have shown him that, supposing a hundred persons could have drunk every minute, and that they had continued without stopping day and night, it would have been more than a week before half of the number could have had a drop. This, it may be remarked in passing, is one of the instances in which none of the proposed reduction of numbers would suffice to render the history of the Exodus credible.

¹ As shewn by the exact resemblance between the accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper contained in the Epistle and the Gospel. One must, obviously, have been taken from the other, and there can be no doubt that the Epistle is the earlier.

there is no reference to them in any writings that have been preserved to us.¹

The result at which we have arrived may be briefly stated. If we could rely upon the accounts of the appearances of Jesus after his crucifixion, we should be compelled to believe that he had not died upon the cross. As it is, however, we believe that he did, in fact, die, and that the belief in his resurrection arose out of circumstances which it is impossible at present to determine; probably out of something seen or fancied by the two Marys. There are, no doubt, difficulties in whichever view we may adopt; but this is nothing uncommon; and they are certainly not of a nature to compel or to justify our belief that a miracle was wrought on the occasion. Such a belief, if justified at all, must be so on far other grounds.

It will then be asked if mankind are really to believe that Christianity, with all that it has done for the individual and for the race, is founded upon a delusion; that the faith of the Apostles had no other basis than the hallucinations of two women acting upon their own excited imaginations; that all the great intellects that have investigated this subject, and have been satisfied with the evidence, have been deceived, and all the noble lives, inspired by the example of Jesus, and supported by his presence and help, have been resting on a fable! There is an ambiguity in the terms of such a question that renders it impossible to answer it by a simple affirmative or denial. If we were to answer it in the affirmative, we should only bring Christians within the common conditions of humanity, and assert that they, like all others, are liable to be allured by false hopes, to be convinced by inconclusive arguments, and to believe upon insufficient evidence; assertions abundantly justified by our daily experience.

And with regard to the Apostles, no one can read with an unbiassed mind the records which we possess of their lives and opinions without admitting that even the greatest of them were

¹ Excepting that to James, in the rejected Gospel of the Hebrews.

capable of falling into errors, both of conduct and of doctrine, and that they were not above the common level of their age ;—unless in so far as they were raised by revelation. No one, probably, would now argue that there was any objective truth in the statement of Paul, that he was caught up into the third heaven, into Paradise, and there heard words that were unspeakable ; or that it was, in fact, anything but a delusion ; some inward spiritual impression transmuted by his imagination into an outward reality. And no one, probably, would suggest that these men were witnesses upon whom we could rely for an accurate discrimination in their account of events between what was fact and what was inference, or for giving us any narrative that was not coloured by their feelings ; even if any of them had left a narrative that we now possessed in its original form. They were eager, credulous, impressionable,—ready to believe anything that harmonized with their expectations. And at this time they were especially ready to believe anything that might prevent them from losing the hopes upon which their souls had so long fed. When the belief in the resurrection sprung up they were in a state of tumultuous excitement, terror alternating with confidence, and despair with hope. Their Master was dead ! The Messiah, in whose coming glories they were to share, had perished by the hands of his enemies as one of the lowest criminals ! The visions of the coming Kingdom had terminated in this scene of humiliation and suffering ! All these were vanished. But, again, this was impossible. They could not have been thus mistaken, nor could their Lord have thus misled them. He could not be dead, or if he had, in truth, yielded to death, it could only be for a moment, and he would ultimately gain the victory over even this last enemy.

There is, probably, no person who has lost one whom he dearly loved, but has felt the impossibility for many days of realizing the loss. And the Christian mourner, though he ultimately learns to acquiesce in its truth, comforts himself with the belief that the departed one is not dead, but only gone before ; that

the separation is but temporary, and that they will be reunited in the world beyond the grave. The apostles would psychologically experience the same difficulty in realizing the death of Jesus as a fact, but their views of the resurrection and of the future life were different from those which now prevail. The resurrection was to take place in their life time, and the resuscitated dead were to live with the Messiah upon the earth. Their belief as to the nature and time of the resurrection, consequently, would co-operate with their instinctive inability to realise the death of Jesus, and with their belief that he was the Messiah, to prepare their minds to receive any statement that he had been seen alive, and to imagine that they had themselves seen him. And such delusions have not been so rare that we need a miracle to account for the belief in this case. Further than this it appears impossible to go with the materials at our disposal, and we must consequently leave it as a problem that is capable of only an approximate solution.¹

This, however, is the only part of the objection that presents any difficulty. That an unfounded belief should be propagated, and should influence the lives of millions, is too common an event in the history of mankind, to excite more than a moment's surprise. Every religion, certainly not excepting Christianity, affords abundant illustrations of the fact. To take one instance only, the validity of which no Protestant will question ; throughout Christendom, at the present moment, there are probably more than a hundred invocations addressed to the Virgin and the Saints, founded upon a belief in their being always present with each worshipper, for one that is addressed to the Father. In fact, the argument implied in the question we have supposed, reduced to its simplest expression, implies—No belief that in-

¹ Since this was first written, Mr. Hepworth Dixon's "New America" has been published. The account it gives of the belief in the resurrection of Mother Ann, forms an instructive commentary on the belief of the Apostles in the resurrection of Jesus. And it is easy to understand how, in the report of distant disciples, the spiritual manifestations to favoured brethren might assume material form and substance, capable of being seen and handled.

fluences the conduct of wise and good men is a delusion, a proposition which can only be maintained by excluding from the title of wise and good all whose belief does not agree with our own. The converse of the proposition would be more nearly true, for all beliefs are necessarily coloured and distorted by the forms in which they are embodied, and the medium through which they are viewed.

But this after all is only a part of the answer. That to which Christianity has owed its worthiest triumphs is certainly not all a delusion. The ideal of self-sacrificing virtue, of pure morality, of love to God and love to Man, of trustful dependence and patient hope, of faith in the ultimate triumph of good and resignation in the endurance of evil, as embodied in the pictures of Jesus which the Evangelists have bequeathed to us, is a real living acting power, the more influential in proportion as it is studied in itself, and apart from the accretions of later dogmas. It is drawn by human pens, and embodied in a human form, and, therefore, it is necessarily imperfect and incomplete. The only light it diffuses, reveals to us its own shadows. The elevation to which it has raised us enables us to see loftier heights and a wider prospect than were, perhaps, reached or embraced by Jesus. But it has supplied an object of love and of veneration higher and purer than the world had ever before conceived; and even now it would not be easy for those who cavil at its shortcomings to portray one more worthy. And while the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and in his return to judge the world, with the ecclesiastical pictures of the doom to which he will condemn the unsaved, and the bliss to which he will raise the elect, have been and are the main causes of the popular triumph of Christianity, it is by the lessons that Jesus taught in word and in act, by his doctrine and by his example, that the support of the wise and good has been mainly secured. It may be, we ought rather to say, it must be, that much of the detail is imaginary, that in proportion as the image of the living Jesus became dim in the recollection of his disciples, his lineaments

assumed more heroic proportions and a loftier character, that imagination was called in to supply what appeared defective, to correct what appeared inappropriate, to aggrandize what appeared inadequate; that as the good news of the Kingdom was preached to an ever-widening circle of disciples, and the Gentiles were brought in, first to share and then to engross the heritage of the Jews, new classes of ideas became naturalized in the Church, that led to a corresponding enlargement or modification of the idea of Jesus as it had appeared to his first Jewish followers. All this we may admit. But there are lessons in the doctrine and life of Jesus, even in their earliest aspect, that will never become obsolete or inapplicable, and it is to their embodiment in an actual living character that they have chiefly owed their practical influence. It is on this account that they have penetrated and leavened modern thought, and have given much of its peculiar character to modern civilization. Lessons of morality had often been before inculcated; prophets had inveighed against ritualism, and had insisted upon the necessity of justice and mercy, of humility and self-abasement, of purity and holiness; philosophers had taught the beauty of virtue, the sacredness of truth, the value of self-control and self-denial, the obligation and the charm of disinterested efforts to do good and to be good; but these lessons had been inoperative, excepting within a narrow circle, because they furnished no adequate example or motive. When the obscure prophet of Galilee became invested with the character of the Son of Man, the representative of collective humanity, and the Son of God, spiritually begotten by the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the occasion of His baptism; and still more, when later, he was elevated in the creed of the Church to an equality with the Father himself; then the fact, that these lessons were associated with his human existence, were enforced in his teaching and illustrated in his life, and above all were exemplified in the crowning act of self-sacrifice accomplished by his voluntary submission to the death of the cross, supplied the requisite

model and impulse. This was an instance of self-devotion, not inspired by narrow and local sympathies, such as had led Romans to die for Rome and Jews for Jerusalem, but by a love for the whole human race, and for every single individual of which it was composed. The love thus shown awakened a corresponding love in those who realized its manifestations, and kindled a desire to follow in the steps and to exemplify the teaching of the Master. And the life thus traced has ever since remained, and still continues the ideal and the guide of Christendom.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOGMA.

“ FALSE Christs shall arise who shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect” is among the sayings attributed to Jesus when predicting the signs that should precede the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of Heaven. But this implies that one who made the claim would be regarded by his followers and by the multitude as the true Christ, and, consequently, that the existence of such a belief¹ would be no evidence of the truth of his pretensions. And these words obviously would not have been attributed to Jesus in a writing appearing contemporaneously with the events to which they were supposed to refer, unless there had been, in fact, many pretenders to the character of the Messiah who had met with some support in their pretensions; probably even among the disciples.

It was, consequently, no exceptional phenomenon when Jesus, on his assumption of the Messianic character, gathered around him a band of devoted followers, and was hailed for a moment as the King of the Jews. Nor was it exceptional that he should have paid with his life the penalty of his pretensions. That which is peculiar, and, at first sight, inexplicable in his case is,

¹ Even if resting upon the actual performance of miracles, “great signs and wonders,” Matt. xxiv. 24.

that his followers should have continued to believe in him in spite of his failure ; and that after his death first the doctrines which he taught, and afterwards the doctrines taught concerning himself, should have produced effects so wide-spread and profound. In all the other instances with which we are acquainted, the death of the leader led to the dispersion of his followers, such of them, at least, as had not shared his fate on the battle field or on the scaffold, and to the extinction of his party. In the instance of Jesus, on the contrary, his death appears to have augmented the faith of his followers, and to have given to their zeal the needful impulse to secure the triumph of his cause.

This result, possibly, may be in part due to the circumstance that Jesus, through all the changing fortunes of his career, abstained from and dissuaded his followers from the employment of force ; and, so far as human agency was concerned, relied solely upon moral means. He made no effort to drive out the legionaries of Rome ; nor did he even attempt to organize his followers for purposes of defence or of aggression. He was a teacher, a prophet whose preaching had excited popular attention, which, combined with his personal qualities, had led men to regard him as the Messiah. In this character he had been followed from his province of Galilee by a few obscure disciples, and he had, for a moment, led the people of Jerusalem to recognize him as their expected king. But he had made no effort to turn the enthusiasm of his adherents to account, and had peaceably awaited and endured the doom that the ill success of his undertaking involved.

The first effect of this forbearance would be that the fate which overtook himself did not extend to his followers, who had done nothing to excite the fears of Pilate, or to provoke the anger of the Jewish rulers. They were safe in their obscurity ; untouched, and, apparently, unpursued. It is true that under the first impulse of alarm they sought safety in flight ; and, possibly, at that moment they might have been exposed to danger had they remained by the side of their Master, and

thus attracted attention to themselves as his adherents. The conduct attributed to Peter,—his denial of all knowledge of Jesus at the very moment when he was drawn to the palace of the high priest by anxiety for his fate,—implies this. But it is obvious from the narrative that the disciples remained unmolested, and (excepting in the fourth Gospel) there is no indication of any apprehension of danger after the crucifixion; nor is it probable that any danger threatened them. The Majesty of Rome had been vindicated by the execution of the pretender to the Jewish throne. The fears or the anger of the Chief Priests and Elders, and of the Pharisees, had been allayed by the death of the too daring reformer. And the mutable populace would soon repent of the impulse that had led them to demand the crucifixion of the peaceful teacher, whose sole fault was a too exclusive reliance upon moral influences. Neither from the side of the authorities, therefore, nor from that of the multitude, would there be any ground of alarm.

Probably, after a short interval, there might even be a reaction of feeling in favour of Jesus that would invest his disciples also with a degree of popular favour. The suddenness and rapidity of the whole proceedings connected with his condemnation—the arrest at night, followed by trial and execution within a few hours—could have allowed no time for reflection. But when the tragedy was completed, it was impossible that some feelings of remorse should not arise. No one among the people had any injury to avenge, or any loss to mourn, occasioned by anything that Jesus had said or done. If he had raised hopes that he had failed to realize, at least he had not engaged them in a vain struggle with the irresistible power of Rome; wasting their best blood in a conflict for which neither they nor he were prepared. The spectacle of patient constancy, too, that he exhibited, and the obvious faith in his own mission which led him to brave death rather than deny his character or renounce his claims, could not be without their effect. And we may be

sure that many who had clamoured for his execution, and had, in the first instance, derided him as powerless in himself and forsaken by God, would return with altered feelings from the crucifixion, and would vainly wish that they had, at least, allowed themselves time for reflection before sanctioning the irrevocable sentence. These feelings would naturally spread, and they would eventually embrace those who had been the friends and followers of the victim. Not merely, therefore, would the disciples who had been the depositaries of the doctrine of Jesus remain alive and at liberty, and thus be in a position to proclaim it, but they would find an audience prepared to listen to them with attention and sympathy.

To this extent we may safely conclude from the materials we possess. But, with the fact that the two Marys brought to the disciples some statement which gave rise to the belief that Jesus had risen, the authority we have hitherto followed fails us, so far at least as regards the events that occurred at Jerusalem ; and we have no other sources of information than the last chapter of the third Gospel and the first fifteen chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The only glimpses that we obtain of the condition of the Church in Jerusalem during this period, from any other source, are furnished by the Epistle to the Galatians, and from these we can gather little more than that it was apparently presided over by two of the Apostles who, in the Synoptical Gospels, appear in such close relationship to Jesus—Peter and John—and by a James, the brother of Jesus, and that it insists upon the observance of the Jewish law as a condition of membership ; conclusions which scarcely harmonize with the picture drawn in the Acts of the Apostles.

The last named work is one that bears upon its face the proof that its earlier chapters were not composed by an eye-witness. It was written many years after the greater portion, and, probably, many years after the whole of the events which it describes had occurred, and in a different country. It is obviously legendary in its character, and it displays throughout a marked

purpose; not so much, however, polemical as conciliatory. Its primary design appears to have been to quiet the controversies that still subsisted between the two great parties in the Church —one appealing to the authority of Peter, as the Apostle of the circumcision, and the other to that of Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles. With this view the two are represented as sharing between them the same work; Peter at first opening the door to the Gentiles, but afterwards ceding the place to the wider labours of Paul; and Paul at first preaching the Gospel to the Jews, and only turning to the Gentiles when the former persistently rejected his overtures. There is scarcely even a hint of any personal differences between the Apostles themselves; though differences are, indeed, described as having arisen among the brethren; but these were adjusted by a decree of the Apostles and Presbyters in Jerusalem assembled for the purpose, to which all parties in the Church thenceforth submitted.

Before attempting to understand or to trace the development of ideas, and the course of events (so far as they bear upon this) among the disciples after the death of Jesus, we must, consequently, perforce examine into the claims of the Acts of the Apostles to be regarded as a trustworthy authority.

The ordinary opinion is that the work was written by Luke, a trusted follower of Paul, and occasionally his companion during his imprisonment at Rome, a short time after the conclusion of Paul's two years residence in that city. And, *prima facie*, there is much to support this view, excepting, indeed, as to the name of the author, in the work itself. The use of the word "we," in the account of the later journeys of Paul, suggests that the writer actually shared these journeys, and the termination of the work at so eventful an epoch, favours the inference that it was written very shortly afterwards. There are, however, objections to this view that have never been quite satisfactorily answered, especially that arising from the very nature of the conclusion. This implies that Paul's residence

in his own hired house, and, in fact, in Rome, had ceased; in which case it is not easy to explain the omission to give some account of the circumstances attending his release, if not of the place to which he subsequently retired.

Even if we were to admit that the inference arising from the employment of the first person was unaffected by these objections—that might, indeed, suffice to prove that the work was written by a companion of Paul, but would furnish no guarantee for its completeness and accuracy in the earlier parts. The work is a continuation of the third Gospel, by the same author. Even upon the orthodox view, it must be admitted that the picture drawn of Jesus in that Gospel is incomplete and imperfect, if only that it entirely omits that aspect of his character which is presented in the fourth Gospel. And there can, certainly, be no greater security for the fidelity of the pictures which he draws of the two principal figures upon the canvas of his later work—Peter and Paul. Apart, therefore, from any doubts that may be suggested by the intrinsic improbability of the events themselves, or by the contradiction which they may receive from other accounts of the same transactions, there is an antecedent ground for regarding the work with some degree of distrust, and for declining to accept it as a conclusive authority. And this distrust is confirmed by comparing it with the only certainly authentic writings which we possess relating to the same period—the Epistles of Paul. No one can carefully weigh the account that Paul there gives of his own position, conduct, and principles, and of the relation in which he stood to the older Apostles, without being struck by the great difference, and even contradiction between that account and the description of him given in the Acts. There is not often any direct denial in the latter of assertions made by Paul himself—so that harmonists and apologists are able to reconcile the two accounts externally; but the real difference is fundamental, and cannot be explained away. If the author of the Acts be correct, then Paul in his letters is a vain boaster,—arrogating to himself the fruits

of other men's labours, and claiming an independence of thought and action which his whole history falsifies. And, on the other hand, if Paul is to be believed, then—subject to the deductions that are always necessary when the most truthful man is defending his own conduct, deductions that refer, not to the events as viewed from his own point of view, but to the necessity of remembering that these events will appear in a very different light to his opponents,—the account in the Acts is altogether unreliable; and this appears conclusively to shew that the work could not have been written by a companion of Paul. For, even admitting that he might have learned from Paul himself the real state of the case which he was compelled in the interests of truth to depict, he could not have truly described Paul as acquiescing in the subordinate position assigned to him, or have refrained from giving a hint, at least, of his pretensions to originality and independence.

It may, perhaps, be regarded as certain, that the visit of Paul to Jerusalem, in company with Barnabas, referred to in the second chapter to the Galatians, coincided, in point of time, with the Council described in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts; for it is impossible to suppose, otherwise, that Paul could have omitted all reference to an event so public, and having so direct a relation to the subject of his letter. And yet few persons, at first, would suppose this to be the case. The account given by Paul of the attempt, on that occasion, to compel the circumcision of Titus, is, of itself, sufficient to shew how false a colouring is cast over the scene by the narrative in the Acts. Whatever view we adopt with regard to the conduct of Paul,—whether we conclude that he allowed Titus to be circumcised, or that he refused to allow it,—there can be no doubt that the question must have been one of paramount interest; that it must have excited much acrimonious controversy, and have left behind much bitterness of feeling. To us it appears probable, in fact certain, that Titus was circumcised. This could not have been done without earnest remonstrances on

the part of Paul, nor without the necessity of justifying his own conduct in bringing an uncircumcised brother into the assembly of the faithful. And while the attempt to inveigle the brethren into eating with one who was uncircumcised would call forth indignant reprobation, the concession on the part of Paul would awaken corresponding expressions of exultation on the part of those by whose interference it had been compelled. If, on the other hand, we suppose the demand to have been successfully resisted, and Titus to have remained in Jerusalem as a disciple without having been circumcised, there must have been an outburst of indignation on the part of the stricter members, threatening the peace and union of the Church.¹ In the Acts,

¹ Much, no doubt, may be said upon both sides of this question, for our only account of the transaction is that given in the Epistle to the Galatians, and the language there used is ambiguous and fairly susceptible of either interpretation. To us, however, this ambiguity in a writer so plain spoken as Paul is on ordinary occasions, appears to lead to the conclusion that the fact was such as his adversaries may be supposed to have asserted; and that he is not denying the fact, but arguing against their inferences from it. The words, too, “*ηναγκασθη, περιτμηθηναι*,” appear rather to mean “circumcised upon compulsion,” than “not circumcised, though an attempt was made to compel him.” They would, therefore, imply that Titus was circumcised. The stress of Paul’s argument appears to be thrown upon the two words, “*ηναγκασθη*” and “*υποταγη*,” compulsion and subjection; not denying that the act was performed, but rather admitting this, and insisting that it was a voluntary concession for the sake of peace, and not an abandonment of principle or a submission to dictation. It is, indeed, quite allowable, so far as the language of the Epistle is concerned, to conclude the contrary; and, no doubt, as Professor Jowett has pointed out, there is a seeming inconsistency in the language of Paul upon the other hypothesis. When we look at the position in which Paul was placed;—alone among men who, though brethren, and (possibly) baptized into the name of Jesus, were Jews and zealous for the law—who were prepared to go any length for its maintenance and to reject all communion with one who practically taught that it might be disregarded;—that Titus accompanied Paul, and was probably living with him, and would have to be introduced as a brother to the assemblies of the brethren, and to partake with them of the memorial supper; that, consequently, those who insisted most strongly upon the necessity of circumcision would have been required to waive this point in the case of Titus, and even to consent to eat with him for the sake of a man whom they were scarcely prepared to recognize as truly one of themselves, it will, we think, appear that the concession was inevitable, and that there was no alternative open to Paul unless he had withdrawn himself altogether. If he could afterwards deliberately say, “neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision,” we may reasonably suppose him to have felt that the concession in the case of Titus was insignificant in comparison with the advantages to be gained; though he may well have been embarrassed by the purpose to which it was turned by those who insisted upon the necessity of circumcision in the case of all converts.

there does not appear even a trace of the fact itself or of the debates with which it was connected, and if the Epistle to the Galatians had not been preserved, we should have known nothing whatever of the demand, nor of the presence of Titus on that occasion, nor even, indeed, that such a person existed.¹

Although, however, nothing is said of the circumcising of Titus to which Paul himself refers, there is, in the next chapter of the Acts (xvi., 3), an account of the circumcising of Timothy almost immediately after the return from Jerusalem, as a voluntary act on the part of Paul, for the purpose of disarming the opposition of the Jews who were living among the Gentiles, and at whose hands he had already suffered and was still about to suffer so much. It appears to us impossible that Paul could have done this; though it is, perhaps, more probable that we have here a distorted reminiscence of the fact that Titus had been circumcised "because of the Jews," than that the author of the Acts invented the incident. That Paul in Jerusalem, where he was about to introduce Titus as a brother to the Jewish brethren, of whom the Church in that place was exclusively composed, should have consented to his circumcision when false brethren had spied out the fact that he was yet uncircumcised, is intelligible, and it is not inconsistent with that principle of accommodation in matters merely ceremonial which he professed. But that he should have circumcised Timothy in Asia Minor, where he was preaching Christian liberty—in his own peculiar

¹ According to Paul, he went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and he went by revelation; according to the Acts, the two form part of a deputation from the Church at Antioch; according to Paul he communicated privately to them that were of reputation the Gospel he preached among the Gentiles; according to the Acts they are received of the Church and declare all things that God had done by them; according to Paul, the Church (or they of reputation?) sees that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, as that of the circumcision to Peter; according to the Acts, Peter publicly, in presence of Paul, claims that "God made choice that by his mouth the Gentiles should learn the word of the Gospel and believe;" according to Paul, "they that seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to him;" according to the Acts, there was a decree of the Church that settled the matter in dispute, and was communicated to Antioch by delegates from Jerusalem. These statements may be "harmonized," but only by a process that implies not only the *suppressio veri*, but the *suggestio falsi*, in one or both.

field of labour,—and that he should have done this not to meet the scruples of men who, after all, were brethren, though narrow-minded and exclusive, but of Jews, who denied Jesus to be the Messiah, is utterly incredible; unless we admit an amount of weakness and vacillation in his character which nothing in his writings, at least, suggests. It is one thing to concede an unessential point to the scruples of weaker brethren, and another to perform the same act to deprecate the hostility of avowed opponents. The former comes within the principle of the rule that Paul himself lays down,—“It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” The latter is a cowardly abandonment of principle. The one, too, would be conciliatory. It would tend to promote union among the more liberal minded, and to prevent the open disruption of the more bigotted. The other would be equally impolitic and degrading,—and would only give greater consistency and boldness to the hostility of those whose opposition had enforced such a compliance. The one, consequently, is what we might expect from Paul;—though he might afterwards, seeing the consequences deduced from his act, have regretted his concession. The other is an act which, according to the picture he draws of himself, we may be certain he would have died rather than have performed.

We, therefore, conclude that Timothy was not circumcised; and if we were compelled to believe that the writer of the Acts had invented this incident, while he suppressed the corresponding instance of Titus, as must have been the case if he had been a companion of Paul, it would be impossible to acquit him of deliberate ill faith. It appears more probable, that the traditions which he followed had confused the circumstances attending the circumcision of Titus, or had left them uncertain, and that he adopted that version which fitted best with his object of bridging over the differences that separated the teaching of Paul from that of the Church at Jerusalem.

Another explanation of the apparent discrepancy may be, however, suggested. The author of the Acts, it may be argued, might have thought it needless to record an incident which the explanations of Paul had already rendered sufficiently notorious, and which, owing to his ready compliance, had scarcely, or not at all, ruffled the surface of the Church, but had felt it his duty to bring into notice the other analogous incident which Paul, for reasons best known to himself, had chosen to pass over; but in this case what opinion are we to form of the candour and truthfulness of Paul? And how are we to account for his silence as to the case of Timothy, while justifying himself in that of Titus? No candid reasoner, while shewing that the latter was a mere concession demanded by the peculiar relation in which he then stood to the brethren at Jerusalem—Jews in the Jewish metropolis,—and by the intervention of brethren, though false ones could have omitted all notice of the other, where none of these justifying circumstances were present. And more, if he from fear of the Jews had caused Timothy to be circumcised, with what consistency could he say to those whom he was addressing, “Behold I, Paul, say unto you, that if you be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing.” It would have been, at the least, folly or hypocrisy to condemn them for yielding in this point to Judaizing brethren, when he had himself thus yielded in the same point to unbelieving Jews.

And, besides this, it is scarcely conceivable, even upon the mere common place ground of a regard for the success of his argument that Paul should have ventured to omit all mention of Timothy. He is not in the position of an orator, addressing an excited audience, who feels that he need not too nicely measure his statements, since his hearers have neither the opportunity nor the inclination to remember the facts which he suppresses. On the contrary, he is writing a letter designed to produce a permanent impression; that will be read and re-read, and discussed and disputed. It would have defeated his own object in writing to have excused one instance of concession on account

of peculiar circumstances with which his readers were familiar, and whose urgency they could estimate, when he was aware that those to whom he wrote could retort upon him that, away from Jerusalem, he, the Apostle of the Gentiles, when entering upon another missionary journey, had attempted in vain to propitiate the enmity of the Jews by a similar compliance; and he must surely have known how ready such a retort would be. Those who "troubled" the Galatians, and desired to have them circumcised, could not have been ignorant of the case of Timothy, and they certainly would not have failed to employ it as an argument against himself. And they might have used it, not merely to shew that his own example proved that there could not be any objection on principle to the circumcising of Christian converts, but also to exhibit him as a disingenuous reasoner, who had kept back the very one act of his own life which told most strongly against his present doctrine.

These considerations might not be sufficient, possibly, to justify our rejection of a contemporary narrative by a known author who had competent means of knowledge, but they abundantly justify us in declining to receive as true an anonymous statement published we know not where nor when, and entirely without corroboration.

The inference to be drawn from this capital instance, as it appears to us, is strengthened by many other circumstances. The discrepancies between the account given by Paul of his own proceedings after his conversion and that given in the Acts have taxed the ingenuity of innumerable commentators, and cannot be reconciled without doing violence to one statement or to the other. According to the Acts Paul preaches Christ in the synagogues of Damascus, and confounds the Jews of that place who seek to kill him. He then proceeds to Jerusalem, where he essays to join the disciples, but is unable to do so until Barnabas takes him by the hand and testifies to his conversion. After this he remains with them "coming in and going out," and excites so much personal hostility that the brethren

are compelled, in order to save his life, to send him away privately to Cæsarea, whence he proceeds to Tarsus. And then, after his departure, Peter first preaches the Gospel to a Gentile, admits him into the Church by baptism only, and eats with him and his family, still being uncircumcised. According to the statement of Paul himself in his letter to the Galatians, "God having revealed Christ in him that he should preach him to the Gentiles," he sought no human counsel nor information, and did not even go to Jerusalem where they might be obtained, but went to Arabia, whence he returned to Damascus. Then, after three years, he went to Jerusalem to see Peter, with whom he stayed for a fortnight, and, with the exception of James, saw no other of the brethren. From Jerusalem he went to Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face to the Churches in Judæa, who knew of him only by hearsay. And long afterwards, when he paid a second visit to Jerusalem, the brethren recognized that just as the Gospel of the circumcision was committed to Peter, so the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him.

Both of these statements, obviously, cannot be true. We may, indeed, admit that if we had a narrative from Peter or James, the colouring of the transactions would be different, corresponding to the different points of view of the narrator, and that it would be equally entitled to credit with that of Paul. When, however, the question is one of fact;—did Paul at once, after his conversion, preach in Damascus so as to provoke the enmity of the Jews, to escape which he is sent to Jerusalem, or did he retire to Arabia? Did he, when he ultimately visited Jerusalem, join himself to the brethren and become so notorious as a preacher of the Word, that they were compelled to take measures for his safety, or did he only see Peter and James, and remain unknown by face to the Churches in Judæa? We are bound to accept the statement of Paul. His letter is written to wavering followers, and would, as a matter of course, be communicated to open opponents. We have, therefore, all the

security that the nature of the case admits, that he would say nothing that could be fairly disputed ; apart from the reliance we should be disposed to place upon his veracity from the very character of his writings.

This investigation need not be further pursued. Any one who is interested in the subject will be able to detect analogous discrepancies in the account given of the position and conduct of Paul during his second visit to Jerusalem at the time of the Council. In a work like the Acts, of which the author can only be conjectured by a double process (it is probable that it was written by a companion of Paul, and, if so, it is probable that Luke was this companion, since he is mentioned by Paul as with him at Rome¹),—and whose appearance is so unmarked that we are unable to ascertain the place or the time at which it was first promulgated,—these discrepancies with the only authentic writings of the period, in the cases in which they relate to the same events, compel us to regard it as undeserving of authority throughout. There can be no assignable reason for supposing it to be more correct in those matters upon which it is the only authority, than in those in which a comparison has proved it to be inaccurate. If, with regard to Paul, of whom the writer may be believed to have possessed some authentic records, there are mistakes such as those which we have indicated, there is assuredly no ground for expecting greater accuracy in those portions which relate to Peter and the other Apostles, where he has nothing but tradition for his guide. And an examination of the work confirms this conclusion.

The Acts of the Apostles may be divided into two portions ; the first of which ends with the fifth verse of the sixteenth

¹ To this Renan, in his recent work, "Les Apôtres," has added a third. "It is not probable that an obscure man like Luke would have been selected by tradition as the author, unless he really was so!" Who then were the Christians up to the first quarter of the second century excepting the Apostles, who are excluded by the introduction to the Gospel, and who were not companions of Paul, that were otherwise than obscure? And "Luke, the beloved physician," was pointed out as a person of education and ability by his profession.

chapter, after which the writer himself appears upon the scene. In the second portion the author, for the most part, assumes the character of a companion of Paul, and a partaker in the scenes which he describes, and it is difficult not to believe that these portions were, at least, based upon a writing originally composed by a person who had been in Paul's company ; while in the first he leaves us to infer that he has gathered his materials, as he avowedly did those of the third Gospel, from a diligent enquiry into the traditions preserved in the Church. And it appears impossible that any one should compare these two portions without perceiving a corresponding difference in their tone, and in the character of the events described. The account of the travels and labours of Paul, in the last thirteen chapters, is for the most part natural and probable. Not that the miraculous element is even here altogether absent, but it is less obtrusive, and less intimately blended with the history. When Paul is imprisoned, no angel unbars for him the doors of his dungeon ; spiritual intimations come to him by way of dreams, or of internal suggestions ; not by enigmatical visions ; and no false brethren fall down at his feet. He encounters danger and endures or escapes from violence by the aid of his natural faculties, and never employs his miraculous powers to avert or to avenge persecution. It is just such a record of missionary labours and perils and escapes as could be paralleled by many a missionary journal of the last half century.

In the first portion, however, the case is altogether different. The bodily ascension of Jesus ; the visible descent of the Spirit at Pentecost ; the gift of tongues (so noticeably different from Paul's description of the same gift as manifested among the Corinthians);¹ the cure by Peter and John of the man impotent from his mother's womb ; the death of Ananias and Sapphira ; the bodily removal of Philip by the Spirit ; the account of the conversion of Saul ; the raising of Dorcas from the dead ; the vision to Peter and to Cornelius ; the blindness

¹ 1 Cor. xiv., 23. If . . . all speak with tongues . . . will they not say ye are mad ?

inflicted upon Elymas by Paul; and the cure by Paul and Barnabas of the impotent man at Lystra: all these belong to the first portion of the Acts, and contrast forcibly with the sober and, for the most part, unexaggerated tone of the remainder. It is true that the account of the earthquake at Philippi, and that of the revival of Eutychus, contain a suggestion of the miraculous, but in neither case is anything related that may not be naturally explained, if we allow for the pardonable colouring given to his story by a writer who describes his impressions of what he has himself witnessed, or what he has been told by others, with a view rather to give effect and animation to his narrative, than to detail the dry literal facts precisely as they occurred.¹ And, besides these, there are only the miraculous virtues attributed to the handkerchiefs and aprons taken from Paul's body, the cure of the father of Publius, and the escape from the bite of a (supposed) venomous serpent at Malta.² No reason, as it appears to us, can be assigned for this, excepting that which we have indicated above,—that the latter portion is based upon the writing (or, as may be argued, is the writing) of a companion of Paul, and that the first portion is altogether legendary.

Besides this, it is equally obvious that the incidents are selected with a purpose. Throughout nearly the whole work the principal figures are those of Peter and Paul;—representatives to the next generation,—the one of Jewish, the other of Gentile Christianity. And it will be seen that the narrative is so arranged as to give the precedence, and, in a certain sense, the superiority to Peter, while bringing Paul as nearly to an equality with him as is consistent with this object. Thus Peter first opens the door to the Gentiles, led by a special divine re-

¹ With regard to the case of Eutychus, who can doubt that if the same event were described in a modern missionary tour, the words would have been “fell down from the third loft and was taken up for dead;” and the Rev. Mr. —— went down and, examining him, said, “trouble not yourselves, for the life is in him?”

² The escape of Dr. Livingstone from the “mouth of the lion” is to the full as marvellous as this.

velation, and Paul only carries on, upon a wider scale and in a different sphere, the work that Peter had commenced. And thus Paul is represented as acting at first in accordance with suggestions from others, while Peter has from the beginning a position of independence and even of authority. But, then, the penal infliction of death upon Ananias and Sapphira is paralleled by the infliction of blindness upon Elymas; the raising of Dorcas by that of Eutychus; the cure of the impotent man at the Porch called Beautiful by that of the impotent man at Lystra. If the prison doors are opened to Peter by an angel, they are opened to Paul by an earthquake; if Peter and John confer the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands in Samaria, Paul does the same at Ephesus; if the shadow of Peter heals the sick, handkerchiefs from the body of Paul have the same power. In fact, the author scarcely relates a single marvel wrought by Peter without also relating one of a similar character wrought by Paul, though those attributed to Peter are almost invariably prior in point of time and more striking in their character.

This parallelism certainly cannot be accidental. Nor is it easy to suggest any other motive than that of healing existing dissensions associated with the names of Peter and Paul, by depicting the two as co-operating in the same work and as manifesting similar powers, though giving throughout the first place to Peter. This was demanded, not alone by the circumstance that Peter had been a favoured companion of Jesus in his lifetime, and that he represented the older idea of the Church, but also by reason of his having become the representative of ecclesiastical authority. And while the writer thus provides for the conciliation of actual differences, he suggests a means for the adjustment of all analogous disputes in the future, by exhibiting an authority superior to both of them,—a power to which they accord willing obedience—that of the leaders of the Church assembled in Council under the presidency of the primate of Jerusalem.

It is comparatively unimportant to decide the time at which the work was composed. Whenever written, it would not the less be the work of one who derived the greater part of his materials from hearsay, and who wrote only for the purpose of edification. Such a work is necessarily valueless as an authority. It can only be used, if at all, for the purpose of indicating the broad general outlines of the prevailing tradition, to which it might be supposed that the writer would adhere. And even in this respect it is doubtful whether any reliance can be placed upon it. If there is anything that appears to be indicated by the early Christian tradition, it would be that Peter was what Paul describes him to have been—the Apostle of the circumcision ; and yet certainly no one would surmise this from the description given of him in the Acts. And if, upon such a point, the author could venture to disregard the tradition of the day, it is scarcely possible to say in what respect he can be trusted.

But, then, the fact that he felt himself at liberty to deal thus freely with tradition, and that his work should have met with acceptance, may be reasonably suggested as indicating a much later date for this composition than that which we have assigned for the composition of the third Gospel. It may, therefore, be argued that the Acts were written even after the revolt of Barchocheba, at a time, consequently, in which the great questions that had agitated the early Church had lost much of their first importance, and when it was both practicable and expedient to cast a veil over the dissensions which they had occasioned. And this may have been so ; but it is quite conceivable that distance of place, the death of all who had been actors in the scenes described, and the dispersion of the community among whom they had occurred were, in this respect, equivalent to remoteness of time. There is no difficulty, consequently, in supposing that the composition of the Acts might have followed that of the third Gospel within a few years, and that both were written before the close of the first ten years

of the second century. And there were circumstances in the position of the Church at that time that might suggest the expediency and desirableness of such a work.

The destruction of Jerusalem, and the consequent flight of the Christians to Pella, must, of themselves, have diminished the authority which the Church of Jerusalem had at first exercised, and must have contributed yet further to increase the relative importance of the Gentile converts. And every succeeding year must have enlarged the proportion of those who had been admitted to the Church by baptism, without having been required to be circumcised. At the same time the Jewish brethren were faithful to their tradition ; and while they practised the rite of circumcision themselves, recognized reluctantly, or not at all, the claims of these others to the full privileges of brotherhood ; appealing, in support of their views, to the names of Peter and James. There was, consequently, a division that impaired, in some degree, the unity of the Church, and appeared to imply a charge of inferiority against the more numerous body,¹ who were represented as disregarding the example of Christ and of the Apostles. And by the side of this controversy there was another question, of probably greater practical importance, because it affected the daily life of all the converts from heathenism ;—were they to be permitted to eat things offered to idols ? This latter question had been decided by Paul as being indifferent as a matter of principle, but it had been left undetermined in practice. An opportunity was thus afforded for wide differences ; and there must have been innumerable instances in which the bolder brother was condemned for his supposed laxity of practice by those whom he, in his turn, despised for their scruples. And, in this case also, each party would vindicate its practice by an appeal to the authority of the Apostle whose example it followed.

¹ In the same manner that the profession of “holy virginity” implies a charge of inferiority against the married brother and sister.

The existence of these two questions, and the conflict of sentiment and practice among the Apostles themselves which they suggested, needed some harmonizing expedient if the unity of the Church was to be preserved, and if any uniformity of practice was to prevail. And, besides this immediate purpose, the imminence of many other differences then emerging into notice pointed out the necessity of some depository of a power of legislation for the Church as a whole. These appear to have been the practical objects of the writer of the Acts; and while preserving some isolated traditions that have no connection with them, and while incorporating in his narrative some fragments of a diary apparently kept by a companion of Paul (which appears to have been freely dealt with), it is to the attainment of these objects that the greater part of his work is directed.

It would, therefore, be idle to attempt to construct a history of the early Church from the materials furnished by the Acts of the Apostles. It is far better at once to confess our ignorance, and to acknowledge that the process of formation by which the dogmas of the Church were elaborated, and the organization of the Church was determined, is one that we are unable to ascertain. All that can be attempted with any hope of success is to call attention to some general considerations, and to fix on one or two points from which we may be enabled to draw inferences more or less probable.

We have already pointed out the manner in which the death of Jesus would probably affect the feelings of the Jewish people towards his disciples. But, in addition to this, his death, coupled with the belief in his resurrection, would at once change the situation of the Apostles. So long as he lived, they, as his followers, occupied a position of antagonism to the existing authorities, but with his life this antagonism practically terminated. It is true that they looked forward to his reappearance to establish the Kingdom of Heaven. Until that event should occur, however, they were not required to take any active measures. They were not to found the Kingdom;—at the most, they were to

announce its approach. Their attitude was that of patient waiting for the manifestation of their Lord; and their duty in the meantime was to preach Jesus as the Messiah and to admit disciples into their fellowship. Presumably they lived in daily expectation of his coming; but there was nothing in this to excite the jealousy of the Pharisees or the fears of the Chief Priests. It is true that their belief in the immediate establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven was essentially opposed to the principles of the latter, and any inopportune zeal in its proclamation might be expected at any moment to provoke some measures of repression. Allowing, however, for mere temporary collisions of this nature, which, besides, were not confined to the believers in Jesus, there was nothing in their avowed principles to endanger their safety.

These considerations may, perhaps, serve to explain the apparently tranquil sojourn of the Apostles in the very city in which their Master had suffered, without requiring us to suppose that the Gospel narratives have exaggerated the antagonism between Jesus and the Pharisees. Even supposing the Apostles to have been thoroughly imbued with the spirit of their Master, they would still feel that the changes which he had contemplated were to be postponed till his second coming; till then they, as Israelites, were to fulfil the law. They, at all events, had no authority to introduce new commandments or to abrogate the old. They might have, and probably they had, gathered from his teaching a clearer perception of the inner meaning of the law; but while fulfilling its precepts in the spirit they would not violate them in the letter. On the contrary, their faith in the nearness of the time in which that law would be rendered supreme and universal would invest even its minutest details with importance. They would, consequently, be "zealous for the law," and thus would secure the respect of the populace, and might even be, to some extent, favourably regarded by the popular leaders. They were a distinct body, but not under this aspect aggressive. They maintained their own practices, but did not

assail those of others. Their sole point of difference with their fellow-countrymen,—their belief in Jesus as the Messiah,—was one that, under the circumstances, would have but little practical bearing. All alike were waiting for the manifestation of the Son of Man, and all alike would be prepared to welcome whomsoever should appear in that character ;—coming in the clouds of heaven, and sending his angels to summon the elect, and to subdue and punish his and their enemies.

And this also accounts for their continued stay in Jerusalem. It might at first sight have appeared natural that they should have returned to their native province of Galilee ; but Jerusalem was to be the place of the appearance of the Son of Man, and the seat of his Kingdom ; it behoved them, therefore, to be ready on the spot to welcome his coming and to share his triumph.¹ Had they regarded the Kingdom that Jesus was to establish as a spiritual dominion merely, or as anything but that re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel foretold by the prophets, there could have been no reason why they should not have returned to their own homes. All places under that aspect would have been indifferent to them, as, in view of the expected bliss of heaven, they are to the Christian. As, however, Jesus was to return and reign in Jerusalem, and as his appearance might be looked for at any moment, that city alone became their appropriate residence. And there it is not improbable that those who survived continued to remain, with the exception of occasional journeys, at least until Jerusalem was girt by the legions of Vespasian.

Perhaps even now some trace of the successive changes in the feelings of the disciples, whilst maintaining this attitude of expectation in presence of the unlooked-for delay in the fulfilment of their hopes, may be found in the varied and somewhat inconsistent sayings attributed to Jesus on the subject of his

¹ When the recollection of the real character of the Messianic hopes of the Apostles had been lost, their stay in Jerusalem appeared inexplicable ;—and then an assumed command of Jesus that they should remain there for twelve years was invented to account for it.—Euseb. H. E. B. V., c. 18.

second coming, and in the parables by which the duties of watchfulness and fidelity are enforced. The first stage, after their original enthusiasm had begun to abate, would be that of momentary expectation, such as is indicated by the comparison of the coming of the Son of Man, in its suddenness and unexpectedness, to the flood in the days of Noe, and by the following injunction to watchfulness; and, perhaps, also by the parable of the ten virgins, for they had only to wait and be ready. At any time the Lord might come, and the slothful and unprepared might be excluded, and they who were watching be admitted into his Kingdom. Then, as time wore on—as years even passed by and still the Lord had not appeared—there would be such a feeling as is indicated by the apologue of the evil servant, and the parable of the talents entrusted to his servants by the man who journeyed into a far country. Their Lord “delayed his coming,” and many would make that a protest for asserting that it would never arrive;—but though postponed it was not less certain, and while the faithful would receive an appropriate reward, those who had abused their opportunities or had been disloyal to their trust would incur a fitting punishment. And then, again, as hope began almost to wax faint, and it might even seem as though their faith had been vain, the convulsions that shook the empire, the destruction that menaced Jerusalem, and the eager expectation of the immediate coming of the Messiah by which the whole Jewish nation was animated and which led them to welcome almost any claimant to the title, appeared to be the evident signs of the coming of Jesus, and are represented as such in the definite prediction assigned to him. And those of the disciples who could recognize none of these various claimants retired from the holy city to pass in some place of security the brief interval that yet separated them from their returning Lord.¹

¹ It is noticeable that none of the sayings attributed to Jesus before his crucifixion imply any obligation to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

It would be interesting, if it were possible, to know to what actual facts the legend of the martyrdom of Stephen and of the subsequent dispersion of the brethren correspond. That it cannot be accepted as historical in its actual form is clear, if only from the want of correspondence between the offence of which he was accused and the speech that he makes in his defence; and it is probable that the manner in which Paul is introduced is not without a conscious purpose in reference to subsequent controversies. Was there a liberal element among the disciples originally attracted by the preaching of the Apostles; a party that anticipated the later teaching of Paul, and the leader of which encountered the fate that the other so narrowly escaped? And if so, what were the relations between that party and the Apostles, and how did it happen that the latter could remain in favour with the people of Jerusalem after a persecution upon such grounds, directed against the body of which they were the head, as we see from the Epistle to the Galatians that they did? These are questions which we may state but cannot fully answer, and the examination of which would lead us beyond our present purpose, which is not to trace the history of the Church, but the development of the idea of the nature of Jesus.

As we have already pointed out, the earliest in point of date of the writings of which the New Testament is composed are some of the Epistles of Paul—those to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans; and, if authentic, those to the Thessalonians, though there is great doubt with regard to the second of these. Nearly contemporaneous with the latest of these was, probably, the original of the first Gospel, which we believe to be represented with an approach to accuracy in the copy we possess. The latter may fairly be supposed to represent the views of the companions of Jesus, and was almost certainly current in the Church at Jerusalem, while the Epistles of Paul were written by a person who had never seen Jesus, and who, from his own account, kept himself studiously outside the circle of Christian

tradition.¹ It will be instructive, then, to compare the view given of the person and nature of Jesus in the writings of the two ; of the companion and witness on the one hand, and on the other of the late converted disciple who had never seen Jesus until he was “revealed in him.” In the former we see a man, wise, truthful, affectionate, a prophet, a teacher of righteousness, a worker of miracles,—“the King of the Jews,”—devoting his life to the accomplishment of his purpose, dying because he is rejected by those who had once hailed him as their ruler, and afterwards rising from the dead. In the latter the human elements in the life of Jesus, his teaching, his miracles, his claim to be the King of the Jews, are practically ignored. With Paul it is not the Man Jesus, but the risen Christ, that is the subject of his preaching, and is invested with attributes of which we find no hint in the Gospel. The humanity of Jesus is not denied. It is even asserted ; but it is not under his human aspect that Paul habitually conceives or exhibits him. He is the Word of God—the Wisdom of God ; the Son of God. He has made the world ; he will judge the world. “God is in him reconciling the world unto himself.” And he is the second Adam, the typical head of the new order of things to be inaugurated at his coming, as Adam was of the old order of things, which then is to have an end.

It is needless to inquire whether it would have been possible for a person who had actually seen Jesus subjected to all the conditions of humanity ;—wearied with travel and needing repose ; faint with hunger and needing food ; repelled by those to whom he addressed himself and needing sympathy ; grieving for the actual or anticipated sorrows of his countrymen ; failing in the enterprise which he had undertaken, and compelled to

¹ This is not only distinctly asserted, Gal. i., 11, 12, but Paul takes pains to exclude every possible ground upon which it might be suggested that his views were not original ; by his words, “I conferred not with flesh and blood ;” by his care to show that he was only at Jerusalem for a fortnight before entering on his mission, and then only saw Peter, and, possibly James ; and by his statement that subsequently he communicated the Gospel that he taught to the leaders of the Church.

retreat before the hostility which he had provoked; betrayed where he had reposed confidence, and rejected by those whom he had claimed as his subjects,—to have entertained such a view of his nature as did Paul. We see that in fact those who had been the companions of Jesus, as a man, dwelt exclusively upon his human character, and that it was among those who had never seen him alive that the teachers were found who invested him at first with divine attributes and ultimately with a divine nature. There may be nothing in the first two Gospels necessarily inconsistent with this view; but certainly no one would have dreamed of deducing such conclusions from them if they had stood alone.¹

Probably there was in this respect a progress in the mind of Paul himself. Assuming the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, and the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians to have been written by him, the former would probably be the earliest, and the latter certainly among the latest, of all his writings that have come down to us. And there is a noticeable difference between the qualities and functions ascribed to Jesus in the former and in the latter. In the first-named he is “the Lord Jesus,” “the Lord Jesus Christ,” “the Son of God, whom God raised from the dead,” who “died for our sins,” and “delivers us from the wrath to come.” In the last “God created all things by Christ Jesus,” he was “in the form of God,” but took upon himself “the form of a slave,” wherefore God hath exalted him and hath given him a name that is above every name. He is “the image of the invisible God,” “the first-born of every creature,” “all things were created by him

¹ The above conclusion would be strongly confirmed by a comparison of the attributes ascribed to Jesus in the Epistle of James and the First Epistle of Peter with those ascribed to him by Paul. There is so much doubt, however, attaching to both of these, that no argument can be fairly based upon them with regard to the opinions of the Apostles whose names they bear. There is not a single expression in either that appears to indicate a personal acquaintance with Jesus; and there are no arguments for their authenticity but the obviously unreliable circumstance that they are written in the names of the Apostles; and the assumed concurrence of the early Church in accepting them, which is negatived by the facts.

and for him." He is "before all things" and "by him all things subsist," "in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and he sits at the right hand of God."¹ Such a change was inevitable. It is only in sterile soils that there is no perceptible growth. In a soul so fertile as that of Paul it was impossible that there should not have been development and progress. The one object of his contemplation was Jesus; in himself, in relation to the character which he filled, and the work which he was to accomplish. From Jesus everything that Paul taught derived its significance and value, and to Jesus all the aspirations that Paul cherished for himself and encouraged in others, tended as their centre and object. It was Jesus who by his death had opened to the Gentiles also an entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. It was Jesus who in his second coming would establish that kingdom, and would call all who believed in him to share its blessings. It was Jesus who had shown himself to Paul to stop him in his career of persecution, and it was Jesus who was in a brief space to be revealed in the clouds of heaven, and whom Paul and the rest of the brethren were to meet in the air. The invariable result of the concentration of the attention upon any one topic is that the subject assumes a gradually increasing importance, exhibits new and unexpected relations, and displays new properties. And this is equally the case whether the subject of contemplation be spiritual and ideal, or real and material. We need feel no surprise, therefore, that year by year the idea that Paul had formed of Jesus should acquire greater elevation and depth. Still less can we wonder that in letters addressed to churches which he had founded, or with which he had long maintained an affectionate intercourse, intended to reclaim them from errors into which they were lapsing, or to excite them to exhibit conduct worthy of their profession, he should have employed the loftiest expressions in reference to the object of his and their common faith and love;

¹ We shall have afterwards to indicate the source of many of these representations.

and to the source of the union that existed between them and the inspirer of the hopes which they all equally cherished.

We may, indeed, doubt how far these expressions are to be regarded as intended to set forth in definite terms the precise view that Paul had formed of the nature of Jesus. Rather, perhaps, it may be accepted as certain that they are only the phrases in which a full mind struggles to convey ideas to which it feels that conception and language are alike unequal; ideas that Paul himself was as far from realizing under any logical category, as he was from expressing with philosophical definiteness. The letters that contained these expressions were addressed to men "unlearned and ignorant," and were written with a practical object, bearing rather upon conduct than dogma. The phrases too that we have cited for the most part come in as it were incidentally, because it was impossible that Paul should write to the brethren upon any subject without associating it with Christ Jesus. If, however, the later epistles are genuine, as on the whole is probable, it would certainly appear that Paul elevated Jesus to a rank only inferior to that of God himself; but no remoter inferences can justly be drawn from the form of particular expressions.

Viewed under this aspect, there appears to be a measure of truth in the claim that is sometimes made on behalf of Paul, that he was the real founder of Christianity, though this claim must be largely shared by the unknown author of the fourth Gospel. The difference between the two, thus viewed, appears to be that Paul anticipated the course of the events of which the fourth Gospel is the product. He practically realized the conditions necessary for the universal diffusion of Christianity. He first gave it the form that fitted it to become the religion of humanity, instead of a mere development of Judaism. And he did this by raising Jesus from the position of the King of the Jews to that of a pre-existent being who had been invested with divine attributes in order to their manifestation to mankind, and who embodied, to the spiritual apprehension of his

followers, the wisdom, power, and love of God, the universal Father. It was not the humble preacher of the Lake of Galilee, or the Son of David, who claimed, at the hand of the Jews, to be recognized as their King, or even the worker of miracles proving his divine mission by the exhibition of divine power, whom Paul sets forth in his Epistles. To have done this would have been to have known Christ after the flesh; worse, it would have been to circumscribe him within the limits of a wornout creed, which had proclaimed its own inability to regenerate the world by the repulsion which it everywhere excited. Such a portraiture might have been appropriate in one who contemplated a restoration of the Jewish theocracy—the re-establishment of the Kingdom of David at Jerusalem under the rule of the Son of Man, and the perpetual obligation of the law. But to Paul, who regarded the abrogation of the old economy as a necessary preliminary to the accomplishment of the work of Jesus, such a view would have been altogether inadequate. To carry out the prophecies, as the Jews understood them, a mere descendant of David, suitably endowed, might be sufficient. To abrogate the law, and thus to open the Kingdom of Heaven upon equal terms to Jew and Gentile—to introduce a new economy that should supersede the old by rendering it superfluous—to break down the middle wall of partition that had hitherto confined the knowledge and worship and favour of the one true God to a small portion of his children, would require a being as far superior to the Jewish Lawgiver as he was superior to ordinary mortals; or rather, to employ the imagery of Paul, as far superior to the angels, through whose ministry the law was received, as they were to men. The enlarged conception that Paul had formed of the mission of Jesus necessitated an enlarged conception of his nature. And these two ideas would inevitably act and react the one upon the other, until the latter had reached the utmost limit that the strict monotheism of Paul allowed it to assume.

The view that Paul entertained of the nature of Jesus may,

consequently, be regarded as self-educated, and as, in a great measure, peculiar to himself. It flowed mainly, if not entirely, from the conception which he had formed of the object of his mission. And this latter would seem to have been the result partly of his own solitary musing during the period of retirement in which he prepared himself for the task which he was about to undertake, and partly of his practical dealings with the Gentile world, and of the opposition he encountered from Jews and Jewish Christians.

It would be interesting, if it were possible, to know the circumstances that attended his conversion, and still more to be able to trace the mental process through which he passed, in his change from the most rigid exclusiveness to the widest liberalism. His own account given in the Epistle to the Galatians is, however, only that "it pleased God to reveal his Son in him that he might preach him among the Gentiles." And we may, perhaps, gather from his claim to have seen Jesus that there was some visual appearance connected with this revelation. Apparently he attached little importance to the accessories of the incident. The account given in the Acts of the Apostles is probably so far correct that it was on a journey to Damascus for the purpose of taking further action against the followers of Jesus, that something occurred to arrest his proceedings, which he and the brethren afterwards regarded as miraculous. And it is very probable that the occurrence, whatever it might be, was connected with or occasioned some bodily illness. This view appears to be partly corroborated by the expression, "returned again into Damascus," which implies that Damascus had been the place at which he had arrived after the vision, and by the immediately preceding statement that he "had persecuted the Church of God beyond measure." It is, however, almost certain that the details of the occurrence have been freely dealt with by the author, and possibly not without a reference to the claim of Paul to be an Apostle, founded upon his having seen the Lord. The account of the light, the words,

the fall from the horse, and the subsequent blindness, is so arranged as almost to exclude the idea of any bodily appearance of Jesus at this time, and there is no mention of any other occasion upon which such an appearance can be supposed to have occurred.¹

Whatever might have been the nature of the revelation, it is certain, unless we reject Paul's own statement, that its first effect was not to lead him to seek instruction from the brethren as to the life or the doctrine of Jesus, but to seek in solitude an opportunity of communion with his own heart and with God. For this purpose he retired to Arabia, and his language would seem to imply that it was at any rate before his return from that place that his views as to the nature of the duties which he was to discharge and the field in which he was to labour were matured. There is nothing to indicate the duration of his residence in Arabia. Possibly it endured during the greater part of the three years that elapsed before his visit to Jerusalem, for the tone of his short narrative in the Galatians appears scarcely consistent with any lengthened or habitual preaching of the Gospel before that visit. At Jerusalem he sees Peter and James, but he denies having received from them the doctrines that he taught. On the contrary, at a subsequent visit, it is he who communicates to those who are of reputation in the Church the Gospel that he preached; apparently in order that it might receive their approval. And the ultimate result was that they recognized the reality of his mission to the Gentiles, and, presumably, admitted the appropriateness of his

¹ There is always a risk of error in attributing a purpose to an author founded upon mere omissions. They may arise from temporary forgetfulness; or the incidents omitted may be so familiar to his readers and to himself as to be apparently conveyed by the language he uses. It is, however, difficult to suppose that the persistent omission of all notice of an actual appearance of Jesus, and the reference to the voice as the only means of communication, could have been unintentional or dictated by any other motive than that of implicitly negativating Paul's claim. And this is confirmed by the circumstance that Paul is never in the Acts spoken of as one of the Apostles. In the description of the Council at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas are pointedly distinguished from the Apostles.

doctrine to his field of labour. Upon this they gave him the right hand of fellowship and sanctioned his preaching, but without adding to or modifying his previous views.

This statement implies that there was some difference between the Gospel as preached by Paul and that preached by the older Apostles. The chief practical distinction between the two no doubt related to the question of circumcision, but it is probable that this was the exponent of deeper doctrinal differences; and that these were connected with his views respecting Jesus. We know that when those Jewish Christians who preserved the traditions of the brethren at Jerusalem ultimately separated from the Gentile majority who then constituted "the Church," one of the grounds of that separation was the lower view taken by the former with regard to the person of Jesus. It is consequently possible that the germs of this difference may have existed from the earliest times, and that they may have been among the points in which the doctrines taught by Paul were considered as unsound or at least exaggerated.

The difference thus suggested must not, however, be regarded as absolute, since we see in the book of Revelations that another class of feelings led the eminently Jewish author of that work to ascribe to Jesus attributes in some respects as exalted and in some even identical with those which we have seen had been ascribed to him by Paul. The similarity in this respect is indeed the more noticeable because it is scarcely possible to doubt that the introduction of the work is expressly directed against Paul and his followers.¹ It seems clear on the whole that the

¹ They that "say they are Jews, and are not;" "that they are Apostles, and are not," can scarcely be referred to any other than Paul. At least, we know that his claims in both respects were disputed in the early Church; and if he is not the person referred to, we cannot even guess who it was. Those, too, who teach to eat things sacrificed unto idols can scarcely be any others than Paul and his followers. And it is at the least a singular coincidence that the Church of Thyatira should be warned against the woman Jezebel, who teaches "to eat things sacrificed into idols" (Rev. ii., 20, *et seqq.*), and that tradition should have preserved the name of a woman of Thyatira who was a devoted follower of Paul (Acts xvi., 14). If the Revelations had been rejected from the Canon by the Western, as it was nearly by the Eastern Church, and as it was subsequently by Luther, no one would have ever doubted, even, that Paul was meant.

Being like to the Son of Man seen in the midst of the Seven Golden Candlesticks is Jesus, though his personality is imperfectly preserved. He, however, is the first and the last; he liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore¹—he is the Son of God—he has the keys of Hades and of death—and he is the beginning of the creation of God: and though he is not indeed the Word of God, yet “his name shall be called the Word of God.” These coincidences of idea and expression seem to imply either that the author of the Book of Revelations and Paul drew from a common source, or that such views were familiar in the circles in which they moved and for which they wrote. And the former at least was in some degree the case. In the Book of Enoch, with which both writers were certainly familiar, and the influence of which is clearly to be traced in almost every chapter of the Apocalypse, the coming one, the Messiah, is described as the Judge of the World—the Son of Man—the Son of God—having all righteousness—eternal in glory—reigning with God—existing before the creation, and predestined to reign over all things.² And in spite of the pervading difference of thought and of feeling between the author of the Revelations and Paul; the latter regarding Jesus as the mediator whose essential functions it was to reconcile the world, especially the Gentile world, to God, and the former as the destined avenger of the wrongs of the Saints (=the holy ones, as all Jews are by birth and circumcision), and the head of an earthly kingdom to be founded on the ruins of all existing powers—they were both led by the greatness of the functions which they ascribed to Jesus, and of the work which he was to perform, to invest his person with the highest attributes of created existence.

If, then, turning from the Apocalypse, which is the work of an ardent imagination, stimulated on the one hand by the atrocious cruelties recently practised upon the Christians at

¹ Comp. Rom. vi., 9, “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more,” etc.

² Kalisch, Gen. 165, cited in Colenso’s Pentateuch and Joshua. Part IV., pp. 311, 312.

Rome, and by the threatened destruction of the holy city already environed by the forces of the empire, and on the other by the laxity and evil practices that, from the writer's stand-point, were threatening to invade the Church itself, we recur to the narratives of the life of Jesus, and of the history of the early Church, we see how great is the difference between their language and that which we have above cited from Paul. Perhaps the most instructive illustration of this difference is to be found in the speeches attributed to him and to Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. Thus, in those attributed to Peter, we find "the Lord Jesus" (i., 21), "Jesus of Nazareth; a man approved by God, by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him;"—"whom God hath raised up;"—"he is by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of God the promise of the Holy Spirit" he imparts it to others. "God hath made him both Lord and Christ" (ii., 22, 33, 36). "He is the holy and just one—the leader of life."¹ "God raised up his child Jesus" (iii., 14, 15, 26). "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom the rulers crucified, and whom God raised from the dead;"—"the Christ;"—"Jesus, the holy child of God" (iv., 10, 26, 27, 30). "Jesus is called to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (v., 31). "He is Lord of all;"² "He went about doing good, for God was with him" (x., 36, 39). "By his love believers are to be saved" (xv., 11). In all this there is no hint of pre-existence, or of any inherent dignity or power. Whatever Jesus is arises not from himself, but comes by the direct gift of God. And he is throughout exhibited as a man,—pre-eminently endowed and exalted, but still a man. The picture possesses what may be termed a dramatic propriety, for it would have been in the highest degree inconsistent that, within a few days after

¹ Apparently, from the context, referring to his being the first raised from the dead, and thus being the leader *αρχηγος*—of those that should thereafter be raised.

² This is probably an interpolation by some pious Christian of later date. It breaks the thread of the discourse, and is scarcely consistent with the other speeches attributed to Peter, or with the views of the author of the work.

actual communion with the living Jesus, Peter should have spoken of him as the Logos, as the incarnate Word, or even as pre-existent and antedating all creation, to those who had themselves witnessed his execution as a criminal. And among his hearers such representations would have excited, not faith, but aversion and incredulity.

Even with Paul, the language that he is represented as employing with regard to Jesus is substantially the same with that ascribed to Peter. "Jesus is a Saviour unto Israel;" "God raised him from the dead;" "through him is preached forgiveness of sins;" and "by him all that believe may be justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (xiii., 24, 38, 39). "Jesus is the Christ" (xv., 3); "the man by whom God is to judge the world" (31). And Paul is represented as summing up the whole of his preaching in the phrase, "Repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (xx., 21). It may perhaps be admitted that there is no absolute incompatibility between the expressions thus ascribed to Paul and those that he employs in his own writings—that he might have spoken of Jesus as he is represented in the Acts, and yet have conceived of his character under the aspect in which it is presented in the Epistles; but, certainly, no one from the former could have inferred the latter. And it is impossible but that in some of his public discourses, especially in those addressed to the brethren, Paul should have given utterance to those loftier views of the nature of Jesus which find expression on every occasion, in season and out of season, in his letters. The fact that no such expressions are attributed to him can therefore only be ascribed to the circumstance that such views were not shared by the author of the Acts, or by the circle for which he was writing.

And this inference will be confirmed by a perusal of the first three Gospels. The whole tenor of these is to represent Jesus as a man, informed indeed by the Spirit of God, invested with authority to instruct and reprove, but neither assuming nor

supposed to possess any powers but such as had been imparted to him. He claims to be the Son of God, and the Son of Man. The former title, however, implies only a spiritual relationship, such as in a degree belongs to all that do the will of the Father. The latter has a double meaning ; sometimes referring to the lowness of his condition, and sometimes appearing to assert a claim to be the coming Ruler whom Daniel had predicted under that title. But there is not one phrase that asserts his divinity or pre-existence. Whether as the son of Joseph and Mary, receiving the gift of the Divine Spirit at his baptism, as appears from the genealogies to have been the earliest form of the legend, or as the Son of Mary supernaturally “conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost,” his existence is throughout assumed to have commenced with his human life. The incidents of his life are all human, according to the ideas of the age. And there is nothing attributed to him in these Gospels, even to the raising of the dead, which it was not believed by the disciples of the next century to have been performed by Peter and Paul ; nay, to have been performed habitually by all the more eminent of the saints and martyrs.¹

It is not, perhaps, easy completely to account for this difference. So far as the Gospels are concerned it is probably owing to the circumstances that they represent the early tradition of the Church, and are confined within its limits. In the Acts, however, it is difficult to suppose that the omission of all reference to the higher conceptions of the nature of Jesus, or more especially their exclusion from the speeches of Paul, was

¹ Excepting, possibly, the miraculous feedings of the five thousand and four thousand, and some of the miracles recorded come near to these. The Rev. J. H. (now Father) Newman, in his “Essay on the Miracles recorded in Ecclesiastical History,” appears to parallel these by the alleged multiplication of the true cross. As an (assumed) physical fact there is, no doubt, a resemblance, but the comparison appears to ignore the essential feature of the two cases ; the one being caused by a miraculous power in Jesus, the other, apparently, by a miraculous virtue in the wood. At least, we have never seen it argued that every treasurer of a convent who possessed a piece of the true cross, and had sold half of that piece, still retained all, or had the power of creating new matter which should, at the same time, be the old.

not intentional. But the real motive of the writer may have been a desire to keep out of sight mere speculative notions, having no bearing upon the practical questions that occupied his attention, and upon which differences might at that time be allowed to exist without affecting the unity of the Church.

It was not, in fact, until the Evangelical history passed altogether out of the limits of Judaism that the more elevated views of the nature of Jesus were embodied in a narrative form in the fourth Gospel. The picture drawn in the previous Gospels was too narrow and local to supply a basis for the wider conceptions that necessarily accompanied the expansion of the Church, and the growing preponderance of Gentile converts. It was necessary that the historical should be made to correspond with the ideal Jesus, and that his life on earth should manifest some harmony with the new dignity ascribed to him in heaven. The representations that had sufficed for the disciples in Jerusalem, while waiting for the return of their risen Lord to restore the kingdom to Israel, and which with more or less of modification had been adopted in the Gospels designed for the use of early Gentile converts, was no longer adequate. And this was not all. As every year lessened the prospect of the return of Jesus in the flesh, the ideas that had been associated with that expectation gradually lost their hold upon the popular imagination, and were replaced by others more suitable to the altered position which the Church was beginning to occupy. The whole of the generation that had listened to his doctrine, or had witnessed the wonders that he wrought, had died—and the literal fulfilment of his reported promise had therefore become impossible. And the Jews, whose king he had claimed to be, and whose kingdom he was to restore, had by their frantic excesses directed against heathen and Christian alike, rendered the very name of Jew odious, and had made it the interest and the wish of the more advanced Christians to mark in an emphatic manner the essential distinction between them.

The peculiarities of the fourth Gospel, accordingly, are all

connected with these questions. It exalts the person of Jesus : it substitutes a spiritual for a material view of the objects which he came to accomplish ;—the “many mansions” in which he is to prepare a place for his followers, for “the new Jerusalem let down” upon earth from heaven ; and the presence of the Paraclete in the hearts of his disciples, for the wine that he was to drink new with them in the Kingdom of his Father ; and it marks the intrinsic opposition between Christianity and Judaism, by exhibiting a similar opposition between Jesus and the Jews at every stage of his career from the very commencement. Jesus is the Logos,—the Word,—not, indeed, God, in the strict theological sense, but with God from the beginning, and himself divine.¹ “By him all things were made.” “He is the light that came into the world.” He is “made flesh,” and manifests his glory as that of the only begotten Son of the Father, to those whom he finds worthy. Before Abraham’s time he is, and he is one with the Father. Obviously the dogma has made, in this respect, a great advance in the interval between the composition of the first Gospel and that of the fourth. Again, he comes to his own, the Jews, his kindred according to the flesh ; but his own receive him not. They are dark and cannot comprehend his light ; children of lies and cannot appreciate his truth. With them his relations are throughout antagonistic, for they neither understand his teaching nor are convinced by his miracles. With the exception of his few immediate friends and followers, the only persons by whom his character is recognized are the schismatic Samaritans, and (apparently) some Greeks who are brought to him during his last visit to Jerusalem. The nation repudiates him, and he, in his turn, renounces all kinship with them. He is in a special sense the Son of God, and does his works. They are the children of the devil—the adversary—and his works they do. Here and there, no doubt, are indications of popularity produced by some miracle, but they are transient, and in all cases followed by a reac-

¹ θεος, not δ θεος.

tion.¹ And they do not affect the permanent and, so to speak, normal hostility with which he and the Jews mutually regard each other.

By the side of these two aspects of the character of Jesus, in itself and in relation to the Jews, is the third to which we have adverted, in relation to his mission. Under this aspect, he is the vine in whom believers are grafted ;—the door by which alone an entrance is to be obtained into the fold ;—the true shepherd, who not only leads his flock tenderly and safely, but even lays down his life for them ;—the bread that cometh down from heaven, of which if believers partake, they shall share his life ;—the water, of which if any man drinks, it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life ;—the manifestation upon earth of the Father in heaven, so that whoever has seen him has seen the Father. He is to be lifted up as was the serpent of old, and then will draw all men unto him. He goes to his Father, partly in order that he may prepare a place in the heavenly mansions for those whom he leaves behind him upon earth, and partly as the necessary condition of the coming of the Comforter. So that by his departure he provides at once for the support and consolation of the faithful in this life, and for their reception into heaven when that life shall have ended. He comes, not to found a kingdom, but to bear witness of the truth. He is a King, but his Kingdom is not of this world. And by faith and love the disciples may enter into an union with himself comparable to that which he sustains to the Father. And this is the ultimate purpose of his manifestation in the flesh.

It will be observed that there is here scarcely any reference to the practical virtues, or any command to obey the precepts of the law. The stand-point of the Jesus of the fourth Gospel is different and, in some respects, higher than this. For the faith and love required, and the guidance promised, may be assumed to involve as a necessary consequence the performance of all

¹ Produced in general by some “hard saying” on his part.

relative duties, whether towards God or towards man ; and, no doubt, this is often the case. But it is, perhaps, quite as frequent a result that the believer, absorbed in these loftier speculations, regards as trivial and insignificant the common tasks of the daily round of life, and is reluctant to leave “the still air of delightful contemplation” for the “cumbersome” duties of active virtue. And it is significant that in one of the few places in which doing is enjoined, the reward promised is not safety but knowledge—“He shall know of the doctrine.” And conversely, the “work of God” is faith, “that they believe in him that God hath sent.”

It only remains that we attempt to indicate the operation of influences external to the Church upon the development of this aspect of the dogma.

CHAPTER II.

DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA—INFLUENCE FROM WITHOUT.

DURING the life of Jesus the movement that he originated was confined within the limits of Palestine, and his mission and character were necessarily regarded from a Jewish point of view. The journey to the coast of Tyre and Sidon, under whatever light it may be regarded, was not marked by any attempt at instruction or proselytism. And even if it were possible to accept as historical the account given by the fourth Gospel of the teaching in Samaria, the statement we have made would scarcely require to be qualified, since the fundamental religious conceptions of the Samaritans were the same as those of the Jews.

When, however, after his death the good news of the kingdom was preached to the Gentiles, and all men were invited by repentance and faith to qualify themselves to become its citizens, the case was to a certain extent changed. The conceptions that had satisfied the Jew required to be modified in order that they might prove acceptable to the Gentile. Or if this should be disputed, it is at least certain, even from the received point of view, that the terms of admission to the privileges of the kingdom as understood among the Jewish disciples were relaxed in order to conciliate Gentile converts. And a little reflection will convince any one who considers the intimate union between rite and creed, that this relaxation must have indicated a corresponding change in speculative views. It was indeed impossible but that such a change should occur. The doctrines

taught by the first missionaries acted powerfully upon the converts ; but the views and feelings of these converts, in their turn, necessarily reacted upon the doctrines.¹ It is, therefore, almost essential, in order to understand the circumstances that led to the development of the dogma with regard to the nature of Jesus, to inquire into the opinions prevalent outside of Judaea. The writings that chiefly suggested the views that are now prevalent upon this subject—the later Epistles of Paul and the fourth Gospel—were written probably at Rome and Ephesus, and bear the impress of ideas foreign to Palestinian Judaism. Such an enquiry will, besides, assist us to understand the circumstances that facilitated the work of the early Christian preachers, and aided the rapid progress of the Christian doctrine.

As has often been pointed out, there were three main circumstances that prepared the way for the diffusion of Christianity, and without which its success from the historical point of view would have been impossible. These were—the diffusion of the Greek language, resulting at first from the conquest of Alexander, and afterwards from the relations between Greece and Rome, so that it everywhere served for the vehicle of communication ; the establishment of what we may almost term Jewish colonies in every principal city of southern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa ; and the consolidation of the Roman Empire, which embraced almost the whole civilized world, and provided probably more effectually on the whole than had ever before been done for the protection of life and the security of property. The preachers of the good news found in every city an audience willing to listen to doctrines, professedly based upon the Hebrew prophecies ; they were able at once to preach these doctrines to Gentile audiences if they failed to convince the Jews ; and they were enabled peacefully and securely to journey from city to

¹ The case of the late leader of the Taepings affords an instructive illustration of the kind of action and reaction to which we refer. There appears sufficient reason to believe that his original opinions were derived, in the first instance, from a Christian source. In their contact with other ideas, they have been so far modified that few could recognize any traces of Christianity in his practice.

city, and from country to country, so long as they were not accused of any offence against Rome. It is true that the somewhat contemptuous toleration which the Romans accorded in all matters not affecting the security of their dominion, left the Christian missionaries occasionally exposed to the violence of mobs. And sometimes the local authorities might hold them responsible for the tumults which their proceedings provoked, as appears to have been the case with Paul and Silas at Philippi.¹ Allowing, however, for these exceptions, which appear to have been principally, if not altogether, associated with the preaching of Paul, it appears clear that the Christian missionaries everywhere found Jews who were ready in the first instance to listen to their teaching; that they experienced no difficulty in making themselves understood among the Gentiles; and that no opposition was ever offered to their journeying from one place to another.

These external facilities were the indications of others more important. They were associated with changes in the popular worship, and still more in the popular sentiment with regard to the objects of worship; and with changes also in social relations and political aims. The restricted and exclusive sympathy of an Athenian or a Theban, limited by the boundaries of the city or the state, and intense in proportion to its narrowness, which was the type of ancient patriotism, could no longer exist. It had passed away with the autonomy of the republic. And even the old Greek contempt for anything that was not Hellenic, though surviving in phrase, could scarcely survive in feeling when barbarians were the masters of Greece, and the Greeks were only one among a hundred subject peoples, owning a common lord and humbled by a common subjection. The equality of all men before the emperor prepared the way for the recognition of the doctrine of the equality of all men before God; and the peculiar privileges of Roman citizenship which might

¹ Much as a London magistrate might now punish an open-air preacher, if he gathered a mob that obstructed the highway, or led to a breach of the peace.

belong to a native of any country, independently of nationality or rank, offered an analogy that might render intelligible the privileges offered to those who would become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And the existence of the Roman Empire—the consolidation of all power in one hand—gave the requisite leisure to attend to the devices of a new faith. A few years earlier, men would have been too busy with the separate politics of each State. Wars and negotiations, the strife of parties, the aspirations, and the dangers of autonomous action would have absorbed the attention, and men would have put aside the inopportune announcement at least until some more convenient season. Communities of disciples, who had fled in despair from the strife of the world,¹ might indeed have been formed, similar to those of the Essenes on the shore of the Dead Sea, and of the Theraputæ in Egypt; but the world itself would have remained almost uninfluenced.

There was yet another effect of the Roman successes that had a more intimate relation to the progress of Christianity. By destroying national independence they had weakened the feeling of reverence to the national gods. It was impossible that they could continue to be worshipped with the same fervour of devotion after their impotence to protect their worshippers had been so signally demonstrated. It was not that victory had for a moment deserted their cause. Such an incident had been of common occurrence; and ancient superstition had no greater difficulty than modern in reconciling these reverses with a continued faith in the power and beneficence of the gods whom it worshipped. It was that every vestige of national independence had been obliterated—that the very hope of freedom had perished—and that a power as irresistible and merciless as that of fate weighed on the world, in face of which hope was paralyzed and effort was vain. The temples that had been destroyed were rebuilt; the violated shrines were redecorated;

¹ As they did from the disruption of society some two centuries later.

sacrifices were still offered ; the splendour of the ritual and the number of worshippers were apparently undiminished ; but the old profound unquestioning belief had received a shock from which it was impossible that it should recover. Henceforth the gods might be implored for individual blessings ; they might be regarded as the dispensers of the gifts of pleasure or fortune ; but they were irrevocably dissevered from the purer aspirations and higher life of their votaries.

The conquests of Rome were only the last of a long series that had swept in successive waves over the whole known world, from the Indus to the Atlantic. There was scarcely a city that had not been pillaged, most of them repeatedly, and not a country that had not been overrun. The original states, established upon community of race and worship, had either been broken up or absorbed in some larger organization. The influence of the past was then everywhere weakened, and an opening afforded for the introduction of new ideas. And the operations of war and especially the carrying away the conquered people as slaves, which was one of its uniform incidents, made men widely acquainted with the philosophy and religion of other lands. The slave might be a man of rare abilities and of high position : a philosopher, if of Grecian extraction ; a priest, or at least learned in the religious lore of his race, if a barbarian. And none of these would forget their old opinions in the land to which they were transported. In Rome, for instance, the Egyptian slave carried with him a reminiscence of the worship of Serapis, or of the deeper mysteries connected with the service of the older gods ; the Persian still offered adoration to Mithras, and looked with undisguised contempt upon "the gods made with hands" worshipped by his conquerors ; the Gaul and the Briton would continue to practice the devotions they had learned in their native forests ; and the Jew there, as everywhere, established his synagogue, and sabbath after sabbath, as he read the prophecies, feasted his fancy with anticipation of the speedy downfall of the power of his

oppressors and of the establishment of the Kingdom of Jehovah. And all these were willing to make proselytes of as many as would listen to them. While by their side the Greek would insinuate his scepticism with regard to every form of worship, and would teach, according to the school of which he might happen to be a disciple, either the indifference of all actions excepting in so far as they promoted or interrupted the happiness of the agent, or the duty of practising virtue for its own sake, irrespective of consequences, and of regarding with composure and accepting with equanimity all the incidents of fortune whether pleasurable or painful.

The picture thus drawn with regard to Rome would be repeated upon a smaller scale in almost every great city throughout the empire. And the emporia of the east, Alexandria, Ephesus, Antioch, had other elements mingled with these, consequent upon their greater proximity to India. If we may trust the story told by Epiphanius, a merchant who had been taught in the schools of India, and who late in life had elaborated a system of religious philosophy, visited even Jerusalem for the purpose either of enlarging or imparting his views, a few years after the crucifixion of Jesus, and met his death there. And we may be sure there must have been many avenues by which the religion and philosophy of India would penetrate to western Asia, at least after Alexander's expedition to the Indus. It is, in truth, difficult not to suspect a much earlier intercourse. The many-breasted Artemis of Ephesus could scarcely be derived from any other quarter; for this mode of representing a goddess was opposed to Grecian taste, and at variance with Grecian symbolism. And it was equally different from the Egyptian mode of representing Isis, with whom the Ephesian goddess was sometimes identified.¹ In India, however, this was an ordinary method of symbolizing the fertility of nature, or the many-sided attributes of divinity. And as no one, pro-

¹ The Isis of the Serapeon was similarly formed; but this was an innovation subsequent to the introduction of the worship of Serapis by the Ptolemies.

bably, would now believe that the image in fact fell down from Jupiter, the legend that it did so may be taken to have originated in the circumstance that it was obtained from some foreign and unknown source, presumably India. And this intercourse would account for the wide diffusion of ideas originally derived from India that we find in the history of the heresies of the first three centuries.

In fact, throughout the entire Roman Empire the ground had been broken up for the reception of new ideas. Everywhere the old faith had been shaken—the old habits interrupted—the old organizations destroyed. There was no longer anything in political life to absorb the intellect or to occupy energy. Power was the reward not of the attributes of the freeman, but of the qualities of the slave; its tenure was as precarious as its price was degrading. And when the Empire failed any longer to secure internal peace, when even that compensation for the loss of freedom and independence ceased to be paid, and every district in its turn was exposed to the ravages and wasted by the exactions of rival candidates for the throne, men in their despair of safety or repose in the present were driven to turn their thoughts to the unseen future. The ties of country had been already loosened; patriotism had perished for want of an object to which to attach itself; and now the blight of insecurity had settled upon everything; no man could rely upon being able to reap the crop which he had sown, or to eat the fruit which he had garnered. The riches of the wealthy only made them the more conspicuous objects for plunder, and the obscurity of the poor too often afforded no protection. There was consequently a predisposition to listen to a doctrine that promised a new era of peace and safety, founded upon the ruins of the existing kingdom of violence and terror. The slave torn from his home and family—the patriot who had no longer a country—the peasant whose crops had been destroyed—the merchant whose stores had been pillaged—the philosopher whose dreams of the dominion of virtue were rudely dispelled by the triumph of

the baser forms of vice,—found each something appropriate in the offer of a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, of a better country, even a heavenly,—of a Kingdom into which nothing that is defiled should enter, of treasures that were secure against violence and decay, of a rest that no toil disturbs, of a joy that no sorrow should trouble. The absorbing enthusiasm once excited by the stormy strife of parties, the vivid patriotism that had animated the citizen of a free state, filling the whole life, prompting to deeds of daring and endurance, and forming their sufficient motive and reward, had gone never in that stage of society to return. The pursuit of philosophy even had lost much of its charm: it bore no longer the same relation to actual life, but was mainly occupied with remote and transcendental speculations, in which the body and its physical and political associations were regarded as clogs and incumbrances. Everywhere men were being led to detach themselves from the world, for everywhere the old bulwarks were crumbling around them.

It has sometimes been a reproach to Christianity that it made no provision for patriotism; but this is partly founded upon a misconception. In Judaea the doctrine of the approaching establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven stimulated the patriotism of the nation, and animated the people to rise against the power of Rome.¹ Of the conduct of the Christians during the Jewish war, and at the siege of Jerusalem, we know absolutely nothing, for the tradition of their flight to Pella preserved by Epiphanius is unreliable, if only for the supernatural revelation that is assigned as the cause of the flight. It is by no means impossible, it is in fact probable, that the majority of those brethren who are described as having been, only five or six years before, “zealots for the law,” were among the most resolute defenders of the city. Such conduct on their part, would,

¹ The original doctrine of Jesus was peaceful, for it limited the action of the believers to moral preparation. But it was also patriotic, for it intensified the national hope, and made every disciple impatient for its fulfilment.

no doubt, have been inconsistent with the lessons of Jesus as preserved to us in the Gospels, but we cannot be certain that these lessons existed in the same form previous to the siege. And even if they had there would have been no greater difficulty in explaining them away than there has been since in the case of the precepts that inculcate love of enemies and submission to injuries. It is not easy to believe that men who expected the almost immediate return of Jesus, to restore the Kingdom to Israel, should have fled from the very place in which he was to manifest himself on the eve of his appearance. Some might have done so, repelled by the temper in which the defence was carried on, or feeling that it was their part to wait for the promised manifestation ; but the greater number would remain, and only when the Romans were finally successful, and city and temple were involved in one common ruin, would they be convinced that their belief had been mistaken.

When, however, Christianity spread beyond the limits of Palestine, it penetrated into lands where all feelings of nationality had been crushed out, or where their display was impracticable. What had patriotism to do in a State in which everything depended upon the will of an irresponsible functionary, whose power was absolute or only limited by an appeal to Rome? Submission was the only wisdom ; and obscurity the surest safeguard. Experience would soon teach the lesson that even a successful appeal to the Emperor directed a dangerous attention to the men who had been prominent on the occasion, and too often marked them out for proscription or for exile. To gain any boon by public efforts—to organize any measures for accomplishing a common purpose—to denounce acts of injustice, or even to be prominent in relieving distress—was to become an object of jealousy to the Government. For Christianity to have inculcated patriotism would, consequently, have been idle, if even it had not been opposed to its fundamental principle. What it had to do among the Gentiles was to invite men to become citizens of a new kingdom about to be established, and for this

purpose to detach all the links that united them to existing institutions and communities. And its reception was facilitated by the circumstance that those links were already loosened. It established a communion independent of race or country, founded upon common beliefs and hopes, and it transferred to this the sentiments of devotion that its members had formerly felt for the land of their birth. It substituted love to the brethren for love of country, and the prosperity and spread of the Church for the safety or aggrandizement of the State.

These considerations may help us to understand something of the character of the field in which the seed of the kingdom was to be sown. It will be seen that it was truly in the fulness of time, when the world was prepared for the reception of such a doctrine, that it was first preached. We may even doubt whether there has been any other period in the world's history when the establishment of Christianity would have been possible. There have, it is true, been many subsequent ages in which the sufferings of mankind have led them to turn with renewed interest to the picture of Christ the Redeemer and Consoler: and perhaps these ages would have allowed of the diffusion of the Christian faith if then preached for the first time. But it was needful for the foundation of Christianity that the Jewish religion and nationality should still subsist at Jerusalem, and even that they should continue to exist for a sufficient time to allow the new faith to assume shape and consistency under their shelter, and to permit the definite organization of the Church. If Jesus had appeared at any other time —even so few years earlier as during the time of the Great Herod, or so few years later as during the siege of Jerusalem, the establishment of Christianity would have been impossible.¹

At the time of Paul's preaching, and during the two years of his imprisonment, the world was at peace. We see from

¹ This may be urged as a proof of the supernatural origin of Christianity. But all the circumstances upon which its success depended, resulted from causes that lie

his letters, and we know from other sources, that Christianity was not the only new doctrine claiming acceptance. And we also see indications of a tendency in the disciples whom he addresses to mingle with his doctrines practices derived from the old worship, and speculations derived from contemporary teaching. The former tendency has no relation to our present subject ; it forms, however, an interesting chapter in any history of the origin of Christianity ; and, if followed out, it might lead to some unexpected results. The question of the lawfulness of partaking of things offered to idols was settled finally in favour of abstinence. But while thus teaching that meats and drinks were not matters of indifference, and that what goes into the mouth may defile a man, the Church was ultimately compelled to adopt many practices from heathenism, either in despair of inducing its converts to abandon them, or in order to remove an obstacle to conversion. These had no perceptible influence upon the dogma, so far as related to the person of Jesus, and may be passed over.

The form of “strange doctrine” that came at first most closely into contact with Christianity appears to have been Gnosticism. Its characteristic feature was the sinfulness of matter, and one of its chief objects, as a system of philosophy, was to reconcile the existence of this evil with the perfections of God. The method commonly adopted among the Gnostics for this purpose was to attribute the formation of matter to some inferior principle, proceeding from one of the emanations of the

outside the miraculous interventions recorded in the Canonical Scriptures. The continued existence of the Jewish people was due to the Asmonæans ; the diffusion of the Greek language chiefly to the conquests of Alexander ; and the establishment of the Roman Empire, not so much to individual genius as to national character and policy working through centuries. If all of these are attributed to supernatural causes, the sphere of the supernatural must be enlarged to embrace all human action, and there is no test by which to distinguish it from the natural. And if not, was it chance or fate to which the concurrence of these necessary conditions was due ? and was it skill in the use of means that enabled the Deity to select the appropriate period for his interference ? Such questions sound irreverent, but they are necessarily suggested by the orthodox view which confines God within the limits of the events recorded in the Canon.

Supreme Being. They filled the interval between the highest heaven, the seat of Deity, and earth, the seat of matter, with principalities, powers, mights, dominions, and names. These, though originally derived from God, who was the ultimate source of all existence, became imperfect and evil in proportion to their distance from him. And it was by one of the lower of these that the earth was created. Man was regarded as a being of a mixed nature, having affinities to evil by reason of his body, and to good by reason of his spirit.¹ The lower powers who ruled in the spheres nearest to earth resisted the elevation of man to the higher heavens. And the Gnostic initiations were, among other things, intended to instruct the neophyte in the means by which after death he might pass through their dominions and reach the abode of the pure spirits that were nearest to the throne of God.

The influence of these ideas upon the views that Paul entertained of the nature of Jesus is clearly traceable in his later Epistles. Just as in the earlier he is occupied in setting forth Jesus as the Christ, and in claiming for the brethren in his name freedom from the yoke of the law, so in the latter his object appears to be to represent Jesus Christ as the highest emanation, or rather, perhaps, as the highest created power,—above all other powers or emanations, either by virtue of his original nature, or of the gift of God consequent upon his voluntary humiliation. The Gnostic *Æons* and *Archons* are recognized, but they are either subordinate to Christ or are impotently hostile to the Church which he has founded. Thus when God raised Christ from the dead he set him at his own right hand in the heavens, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but in that which is to come (*Eph. i., 20, et seq.*). It is the medium of approach to the otherwise inaccessible God (*ii., 18*). The Church is to shew the manifold wisdom of God

¹ Paul obviously shares this sentiment. "In my flesh dwelleth no good;" "with the mind I serve the law of God, with the flesh the law of sin" (*Rom. vii., 18, 25*).

to principalities and powers in the heavens (iii., 10). The saints are to understand the length and depth and breadth and height (iii., 19).¹ They formerly walked according to the *Æon* of the world—the Archon of the power of the air (ii., 1, 2). And even now they wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers—the “Cosmocrators” of this dark age, against evil spirits in the heavens (v., 12).

It is not necessary to multiply quotations.² Those which we have cited are enough to shew the influence that Gnostic speculations had upon the language in which Paul sets forth his views as to the nature and dignity of Jesus, if not upon the views themselves. He does not deny the existence of an *Æon* of this world or of the Archons, Cosmocrators,—powers or names to which the Gnostics attributed so much. He recognizes their being and their power; they are the opponents of Christ and of his Kingdom—the assailants of the Church—the enemies of the saints. But Christ has been elevated above them in power and dignity, and is therefore able to support those who believe in him against their assaults. The saint has to wrestle with these foes whose service he has renounced; but aided by Christ his final triumph is certain. They may trouble his earthly pilgrimage, but they cannot bar his entrance into the presence of God, whither Christ has preceded him. To Christ himself they are subordinate in rank and in authority. Every development of the Gnosis, therefore, that tends to their elevation only aggrandizes the Christian conception of the Lord; for he is their superior and ruler. They formed, as it were, a scale by which the mind might rise to a contemplation of the superior dignity of Christ, a standard by which the loftiness of his nature might be measured.

The process in Paul’s mind we may conjecture to have been this. As Jesus by his resurrection and ascension was proved

¹ All these are terms employed by the Gnostics, and as having each a definite meaning.

² We may refer to Phil. ii., 5, *et seq.*; Col. i., 15–18, 19, 20; ii., 3–8, 9, 10, 15, 18–20. And there are many other traces of the same ideas to be found in these three Epistles.

to be the destined founder of the Kingdom of Heaven—the appointed judge of all men—God's vicegerent and representative—he must necessarily be superior to every other derived existence. If, therefore, the men of knowledge were right in supposing that the present world was ruled by spiritual influences, and that other higher but hostile powers filled the lower celestial spheres, these were either originally inferior to Jesus or he had been elevated above them, when God raised him to his own right hand in heaven. If by Jesus God was to judge the world, he must be superior to the Prince of the world. If he was to gather from the nations a separated people and to bring them to himself, he must be able to defend them from all the various foes by whom they might be assailed or obstructed. If he was to found a heavenly kingdom he must be able to subdue all hostile forces, and either reduce them to subjection or drive them beyond the limits of his dominion.

The influence of Gnosticism upon Paul's idea of Jesus, as gathered from his writings, appears to have been confined within these limits. It was indirect, and probably affected not so much the character of the conception as the language in which it was described. There was nothing in any of the passages to which we have referred that necessarily contradicted the *Gnosis*.¹ Many of the leading Gnostics of the following century appear in fact to have identified Jesus with the highest power or first emanation from the Supreme Being—the “*Sophia*” or wisdom of God. By this means they were brought into such relations to the Church as led to their being regarded as heretics. These speculations were known independently of and even antecedently to Christianity. It is, in fact, evident from these Epistles, that the first generation of converts was familiar with doctrines similar to those subsequently developed and systematized by Basilides and Valentinus, and that they needed to be cautioned against some of their con-

¹ There was contradiction in the attributions of the creation of the world to Jesus; but this did not prevent Paul from regarding matter as essentially evil.

sequences. And as these doctrines had no root in the life and teaching of Jesus, and could not have been thence derived, they must have had an independent origin. The mature form in which they are presented implies a lengthened previous development. The language of Paul shews that there was an aspect under which they might be regarded that was not inconsistent with Christian doctrine; and there can be no doubt that they facilitated the spread of the Gospel, but not without greatly modifying its nature. The progress of opinion has eliminated nearly the whole of the Gnostic machinery from the faith of Christendom, though some of their fundamental conceptions still remain, and may be traced in much of the popular theology of the day.

The later developments of Judaism outside of Palestine afforded another class of ideas that tended to aggrandize the conception which Paul formed of Jesus. In the Hebrew Scriptures are many representations of the actions, many descriptions of the manifestations of Jehovah, tinged with the anthropomorphism of the age. These, even among the Palestinian Jews, had become repugnant to their more elevated views of the God-head. And as regards those who dwelt in the seats of Eastern commerce, especially in Alexandria, and who were thus brought into contact with Greek philosophy, this repugnancy became deeper in proportion to the enlarged circle of ideas with which they were familiar. It had consequently become the practice to refer these acts and manifestations not to Jehovah himself but to some angel or messenger, or to his word, or wisdom, or spirit. In the latter case the idea appears to have been indeterminate, and to have hovered between that of a distinct personality and that of an attribute merely, gradually inclining to the former. The one God of Judaism was thus removed from direct contact with human affairs. Himself invisible, unapproachable, and incomprehensible, pure, spiritual, changeless, He was on that account incapable of operating upon matter or directing the shifting destinies of men or nations. It

was needful, therefore, that some intermediate agency should be devised by means of which his control of the world might be vindicated and his essential characteristics preserved.

No one at that time had raised himself to the conception of law at once universal and unchanging. The nearest approach to such an idea was that of fate, blind and inexorable. And this, though above everything and ultimately controlling everything, left room for the volitions of innumerable inferior agencies, malignant or propitious. It would not have been possible for any one at that time to have realized the idea that the tempest that sunk a fleet, or the earthquake that overwhelmed a city, or the pestilence that wasted a people, or the comet that brought wars and famines in its train, was only a result of the same forces acting in obedience to the same laws that provided for the beauty and fertility of the earth—that gave “rain from heaven and fruitful seasons,” and that regulated the stars in their courses. And if anyone, in a moment of inspiration, had raised himself to the height of such an idea, he could not have justified it to himself or to others. All these “fateful influences” were accordingly referred to the agency of some superior being.

Nor was it possible for these thinkers to refer such visitations to the direct personal intervention of the one supreme God. Even the creation of the visible world, and of the human race with its material form and fleshly appetites, was regarded as inconsistent with his perfections. To have attributed this to him would have been to make him the immediate cause of that which was the source of all imperfection and sin. The origination of matter, and the regulation of material phenomena, were consequently attributed to inferior personalities—deriving their existence from God, and the higher, at least, in a measure partaking of his nature—the “Logos” or “Sophia;”—the word or wisdom of God, or powers or angels. To the former was ascribed the creation of the world. And just in the same manner that Paul availed himself of the Gnostic ideas familiar

to the disciples whom he addressed, to aggrandize the character of Jesus as the Christ, by raising him above all the beings whom they recognized; so he avails himself of these Judeo-Alexandrine ideas for the same purpose. Jesus is the wisdom of God and the power of God ; by him God made the world ; he is the first born of every creature, the type of the spiritual man, the medium by whom is introduced the new heavenly dispensation. In these various expressions Paul uses language which, as we see from Philo, was employed by thinkers of another school, for the purpose of expressing their solution of the problem with which they were occupied. And there can be no doubt that not only the language but the ideas had been originally derived by Paul from this school, either through the teaching of Gamaliel, or, as may be even suggested, from Philo himself; though their spheres in life were too widely apart to render this latter suggestion probable.

The peculiarity of Paul in this respect is not that he recognizes the existence of this intermediate principle, but that he identifies it with Jesus. And it may be doubted whether he has any independent belief upon the subject. It is possible that, apart from his faith in Jesus, he would have attached no importance to it. Such ideas to him would be mere matters of speculation, of which he had heard, but which had no hold upon faith or practice. When, however, by the vision or revelation that convinced him of the resurrection of Jesus, he was led to recognize him as the Messiah,—the founder of the Kingdom of God,—all these ideas acquired significance and vitality. They were no longer idle speculations fitted to occupy the leisure of some dreaming recluse. They became actual realities, embodied in the person and office of the Lord. His resurrection from the dead proved him to be the Son of God in an emphatic and exceptional sense. He was thus the instrument of reconciliation between God and the world—the medium through which God displayed his mercy and power in bringing the world back to himself. And this could be no

new relation. He was the first born of the dead, and in this sense, at least, the first born of every creature. It was but a step from this to regard him as the beginning of the creation of God. Nay, his birth must even have preceded the creation of the world ;—and in that case he must be that being, whether son, or word, or power, or wisdom, by whom God made the worlds ; and this involved yet further consequences. As in his first aspect Jesus was the framer of whatever existed, so in his last manifestation he was to destroy the works of the Devil, and restore all things ; triumphing not only over Satan, but over sin ; and bringing the whole redeemed universe into willing subjection to God, to whom on the completion of his work he yielded back the authority which he had received.¹ Thenceforth God was to reign alone over a holy, spiritual, harmonious world, in which nothing that was alien to his nature or rebellious to his authority would exist.

It is true that Paul was not always able to maintain his spirit at such an elevation. The obvious frailties and imperfections of the Saints—the hostility of the Jews—false doctrines among the brethren—idolatry and wickedness among the heathen—the falling away of friends—weakness in his own flesh—all these clogged his mental flight and dimmed his spiritual vision. They brought too vividly before him the actual condition of the world and of the Church. They were impediments in the way of the truth—obstacles to the progress of the Gospel—hindrances that even delayed the manifestation of Jesus to establish his kingdom. And it is no matter of surprise that in face of these realities his faith in the ultimate universal triumph of good should sometimes fail, that he should be occasionally unable to rise above the dark clouds that bounded his horizon to the pure and serene sky beyond. In spite of all, the essential feature of his views with regard to Jesus was this,—that as he was the first manifestation of God, and his

¹ 1 Cor. xv., 24, *et seq.* It is true that Paul uses the word death to describe the last enemy, but in his idea sin and death mutually imply and include each other.

agent in creating the world, so he was the destined agent to create it anew spiritually, and thus to bring it back to God. And this view would have lost all its value to him, if, after all, Satan was still to be not only rebellious but the ruler of a world in which evil was to subsist and be propagated for ever, and which included the great majority of the human race. There would, indeed, be no meaning or value in a triumph that left the adversary in possession of nearly all the object contended for,—in an infinite sacrifice that rescued only a fraction of those for whose redemption it was made.¹ And Paul certainly, whatever deductions may have been made from isolated expressions, never supposed that Jesus intended to limit the saving virtue of his death to those who might hear of his name before the moment of his hourly expected reappearance.

From this it will appear that there were two classes of ideas outside of the original picture of Jesus, that helped to form the conception of Christ that Paul presents to the disciples in his Epistles. Of these one operated chiefly by way of contrast and the other by assimilation. To the followers of the Gnosis, Paul set forth Jesus as raised above the powers whom they acknowledged to be the rulers of the world and of the lower Heavens; as entitled to their worship and able to vanquish their hostility. To the Jews and to those who believed with them, and who had learned in the Schools of Philosophy to remove Jehovah from all contact with the world, he preached Jesus as that manifestation of God to which they attributed the original creation of matter and all the intra-mundane appearances which their Scriptures had assigned to Jehovah himself. And as there were many points in common between the Gnosis

¹ It has always been the belief of the great thinkers of the Church that the number of the lost very far exceeds that of the saved. At present, in Protestant countries, there is rather a reaction against this doctrine, even among the most rigidly orthodox; and the ranks of the redeemed are swelled by those of the heathen who have never heard of the name of Jesus, and of infants who have not committed actual sin. And yet these same persons, with amiable inconsistency, organize missions to the heathen, and seek to diminish the destruction of infant life.

and the Judæo-Alexandrine Philosophy, there was nothing in either of these aspects of the character of Jesus that would not be intelligible to the followers of both systems. It is obvious that this gave a standpoint to the teaching of Paul and facilitated its reception ; it was new, not absolutely but relatively. Its novelty consisted in the circumstance that these ideas were brought down from the region of speculation and clothed in the human form of the crucified Jesus. But this, to the Gentiles at least, was an attraction, for it furnished an analogy to one of their most familiar conceptions—that of a divine being manifesting himself in the likeness of man. And even to the Jews it offered a means of reconciling a belief in the superhuman attributes and origin of Jesus with their worship of Jehovah as the one true God. In this way it enabled them to embrace the new faith without abandoning the old ; and when this was no longer practicable they fell off. The number of those among the Jews who have recognized Jesus as Jehovah has always been infinitesimally small.

These remarks have proceeded throughout upon the assumption that Paul was the author of all the Epistles popularly attributed to him, except that to the Hebrews. And on the whole that is perhaps the most probable conclusion.¹ It is not, however, free from difficulty. Apart from questions of style, upon which in this case little or no reliance can be placed, for the alleged differences are not greater than most men might find in different letters of their own, there are serious differences in the modes of presenting the truths taught, if not in the truths themselves, scarcely to be looked for in letters written within so short a time and to the same class of persons. And upon the ordinary view that the Gnostic writers, accounts of whose systems we have from the Fathers, such as Basilides and Valentinus, were the authors of the ideas that lay at the base of their systems, it would be difficult not to conclude

¹ Exepting the Pastoral Epistles, but they have no bearing upon the question we have discussed.

that the three Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, were composed after their time, or at any rate after the publication of their treatises. If, indeed, it is understood that during the life of Paul, and probably long before, these ideas were widely diffused through the regions which he visited, and were thus familiar to his converts, this ground of objection to their authenticity is removed. Other objections remain, and the question cannot be considered as decided, since, hitherto, no adequate reasons have been assigned for the change in the manner in which Paul conceives and exhibits the character of Jesus in two Epistles so near in point of date as those to the Romans and to the Ephesians.¹ The question though interesting, like many others that we have encountered, lies outside the subject of the present investigation. For these later Epistles, whether written by Paul or not, equally exhibit the process by which the conception of Jesus as the Christ was elevated and transformed.

The fourth Gospel indicates a further stage in the progress of Christian thought. It has freed itself from the disturbing elements with which it was at first associated, and has succeeded in realizing an idea of Jesus at once homogeneous and independent. The influence of both Alexandrian and Gnostic views may be distinctly traced, but they do not even form the groundwork of the picture. Jesus is no longer the word or power of God, he is the Logos, the word, simply. No longer an emanation or an attribute, he is a divine person. He is not the first-born of the creation of God, he is with God in the beginning. God does not make the worlds by him, but it is by himself that they and all things are made. He becomes incarnate, but the veil of flesh does not conceal his glory from those who are spirit-

¹ It is only in these later Epistles (and in the pastoral) that he refers to the ascension of Jesus, and many of the views set forth in the earlier Epistles are greatly modified.

ually enlightened. It is not the being raised from the dead that demonstrates his essential nature ; this is exhibited by his works and by his words. He does not wear the form of a slave, and make himself of no reputation ; on the contrary, the works that he does bear witness to all men that he is one with the Father. God does not raise him from the dead ; the taking up again of his life is the result of his own power. It is not his lowly position that provokes distrust ; it is the inherent antagonism between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, life and death. Such contrasts might be indefinitely multiplied. These that we have instanced, however, are sufficient to shew how, under the influence of a mode of thought opposed to Judaism, many of the accessories to the loftier views that Paul first promulgated have been eliminated.

In all this we see the influence of Gentile ideas ; and it is not merely impossible that such a work could have been written at Jerusalem, or based upon the traditions of that place ; it is equally impossible that it should have been written by a Jew of Palestine,—unless, indeed, he had been separated from his country at so early an age as to allow of his early preconceptions being utterly obliterated by the influence of Gentile culture. There is just so much recognition of Judaism as to maintain its historical connection with Christianity. Less than this could not be done by any Christian writer, at least not without placing himself outside the circle of ecclesiastical tradition, and thus ensuring the ultimate rejection of his work. But this is all. The patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets, are made to bear testimony to Jesus, and thus, by implication, they are declared to have been inspired. But the Jewish people, among whom Jesus lived, and before whom his miracles were performed, are types of the world in its opposition to himself and his Church. In this respect they take the place of the Gentiles and the publicans of the earlier Gospels. And it is noticeable that there is no mention in the fourth Gospel of either of these classes. There is not even an allusion to the latter, and when the writer

does refer to nations outside Judæa, he uses the word Greek,¹ not Gentile; thus symbolizing the distinction between the Greek, as the representative of civilized mankind, and the Jew; instead of that between the Jew as the heir of the covenant, and the whole outside world.

The fourth Gospel may be regarded as the work that fixed the position of Christianity between Gnosticism, on the one hand, and Judaism, on the other. The tendency of the former was to substitute an ideal for the historical Jesus, and to break absolutely with Judaism in the past as well as in the present; that of the latter to keep Jesus strictly within the limits of humanity, and to maintain the perpetual obligation of the law. The former tendency is met by asserting the real existence of Jesus, by exhibiting him as subject to the conditions of human life, circumscribed within the limits of time and place, and at the same time making him the subject of Hebrew prophecy, and the fulfilment of the purpose of God made known to Abraham and Moses. Jesus is the Logos, but he is "made flesh;"—thus emphatically contradicting the Gnostic dogma of the essentially evil nature of flesh in itself;—he becomes a real man, and as such is crucified; and it is of him that Moses and the prophets did write. Beside this, there is a more profound though less obvious contradiction. The Gnostics admitted, to a certain extent, the Hebrew Scriptures, but they regarded Jehovah as an inferior and even an evil power. He had made and he ruled the world; but by this he was shewn to be of a lower order of existence, far below the pure and holy being to whom alone the name of God was due. And their opposition to Judaism was founded upon the view they thus took of its God. The Jews were the children of the evil ruler of this world—his people and subjects. The fourth Gospel, on the contrary, attributes the formation of the world to Jesus as the Logos, in which character he partook of the Divine nature. And though it

¹ John vii., 35; translated Gentile in the Authorized Version.

adopts the Gnostic view that the Jews are the children of the prince of this world, yet that prince is not Jehovah but Satan ; and they are proved to be his children because they refuse to recognize Jesus as him of whom Jehovah had spoken through the prophets, whose day Abraham had rejoiced to see, and of whom Moses had written. The latter—the Jewish tendency—is met by exhibiting Jesus as pre-existent and divine, and by passing over the law as a thing worn out, and, therefore, not even needing to be noticed.

The causes that led to the composition of the fourth Gospel appear to be indicated by the nature of the work itself. To one who had been able to realize such a conception of Jesus as it embodies, the existing narratives must have appeared imperfect and even derogatory. The Jesus in whom the Church believed, who was preached to the Gentiles, whom the Jews as a people had rejected, must have been something very different from the Son of David and Saviour of Israel who was set forth in the earlier Gospels. The time had, consequently, come when there was room and need for a fresh delineation from the more advanced and altered point of view of the writer. His object was not controversial but constructive ; he wished to lay the basis for a loftier and, in his belief, a truer idea of the Saviour of the world than that which prevailed. This does not, indeed, exclude the influence of current modes of thought ; rather it implies their effect ; and it was by contact with these, and by musings on the character of Jesus in the relations that it bore to the speculations of the schools, to the so-called knowledge of the Gnostics, to the Jewish people, and to the Jewish Scriptures, that the conception had been gradually elaborated. And it had points of contact with all these, as appears from the circumstance that philosophers, Gnostics, and Jews had all claimed to be Christians, and had depicted Jesus from their own point of view.

No one, therefore, who was familiar with the writings of Christian or self-styled Christian authors, or conversant with the questions that were agitated in the Church, could altogether

escape the influence of these various forms of thought. In any attempt to portray Jesus, his nature, position, and doctrine must be defined expressly or implicitly with reference to these systems. It is not necessary to suppose that this was done here with deliberate purpose ; it is more probable that the process was half unconscious. The author, in his conversations with Christians of different shades of opinion, or in his own solitary meditation, had been led to separate his ideal of Jesus from one and another of the narrow or lowering conceptions with which he had found it associated. And in every such case it would be natural for him so to define his own view as to indicate this separation. And when at length the image in his own mind was complete, he employed the vehicle of narrative to impress that image upon the doctrine of the Church. He was one of those who had not seen and yet had believed. But he felt the necessity of clothing himself with the authority belonging to one who had seen, and he accordingly so writes as to imply—though nowhere, in the original Gospel, to assert—that the work has the sanction of the traditional head of Asiatic Christianity—the last survivor of those who had been the chosen companions of Jesus—the Apostle John.

We have already referred to the circumstance that when Paul wrote the world was at peace. Even then an experienced eye might detect some signs of the coming crisis. Matters were ripening for the revolt of the Jews. Their impatience of the yoke increased with every year's endurance, and a sense of insecurity induced their rulers to employ sterner measures of repression. And, in Rome itself, the excesses of Nero were weakening the foundations of the throne, and sapping the feelings of reverence with which the imperial house had been regarded. Everywhere there was a vague sense of uneasiness and alarm. Men knew not what they feared ; but not the less did an undefined terror brood over them. It was not

the Christians only who felt that the time was short. All men recognized the impossibility that the existing calm should long endure, though they knew not from what quarter the tempest was to burst, nor in what form it would come. The visions of peace and happiness awakened in some sanguine souls by the final establishment of Augustus as the one ruler of the world, which found their happiest expression in the verse of Virgil, had been dissipated by experience. The strife of parties was quelled—the animosities of rival States had died out, or were repressed—“kings stood still with awful eye” in presence of the resistless power of the Emperor, and scarcely dared to unsheathe the sword for any object. But the energies that had once found a healthy vent in the free but tempestuous atmosphere of contending States and parties, were not destroyed by being deprived of their accustomed exercise. They continued to subsist, though the sphere and nature of their action was changed ; they corrupted the organizations which they could no longer animate. They constituted elements of disintegration and disorder, producing dissatisfaction with the present, and a readiness to welcome any proposal that held out a prospect of change.

Such a state of feeling is to be traced with more or less distinctness in the writings of Paul. These shew a tendency in the disciples to free themselves from the restraints of society and government ; a restlessness and impatience ; a disposition to despise or to neglect the daily duties of their position, and to regard their admission into the Church as freeing them from all other obligations. No doubt something of this was due to the nature of the faith which they had embraced. Its anticipations and its requirements were alike unfavourable to the continued performance of the old duties. But much of it was also due to circumstances common to the whole of society, and to feelings in which all ranks in some degree shared. Still Paul could appeal to his converts on the ground of the security associated with the administration of justice, the protection it afforded to the peaceful, the punishment it inflicted upon evil doers ;

and could on this account claim their obedience to the existing authority. There was the excitement of anticipation—the hope or the fear of a change; but in the meantime men had peace and safety in the discharge of their duty.

In the period, however, that elapsed between the Epistles of Paul and the composition of the fourth Gospel, great changes had occurred. The Roman Empire had been twice left as a prize to be contended for by the sword. The power of the Emperor might be as resistless as ever, but the old feelings of reverence and security that had once been associated with his office, no longer existed. He owed his position to the support of the Legions, and his right was merely the right of the strongest. It had no moral basis; submission might be prudent or necessary, but that was all. It was not dignified by the associations connected with an hereditary title, such as had in a measure begun to gather round the first imperial line, or with one conferred by the free choice of the people. The existence of the civil power was a fact, to which every one was compelled to accommodate himself, as to any other inevitable incident, but it had no hold upon the popular sentiment, and awakened no feelings of loyalty.

Coincident with this change in the position of the central authority, with which the relations of the Church were chiefly external, there had been an equal change in Judaism with which Christianity was so intimately connected. The siege of Jerusalem, and its capture by Titus, had scarcely affected the views of the contemporary generation of believers. They were, in fact, regarded as necessary scenes in the development of the great drama. Whether or not their occurrence had been shadowed forth by Jesus, it is certain that they were regarded by those who witnessed them as signs that were to precede the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds. There was nothing necessarily inconsistent with the views of the early Christians in the circumstance that the old dispensation should be abolished before the new was inaugurated. And to the Jews themselves,

their failure, and the capture and destruction of the holy city, only proved that they had not selected the predicted time for their attempt. Their faith in the prophecies, as interpreted by themselves, remained unshaken, and they were prepared as readily to undertake the re-conquest of their country as they had been before to undertake its defence. Nevertheless, that event was a turning point in the relation of the two systems; and from this time they began practically to diverge.

We have no indication, indeed, of any complaint on the part of the Jews that their Christian brethren had deserted them in the time of their extremity. And though James, the brother of Jesus, was put to death a short time before, it was by Ananus, a Sadducee and supporter of the Roman authority, and, probably, in dread of seditious movements connected with the Messianic expectations of the people. This, indeed, is not hinted at by Josephus, but his silence forms no argument to the contrary, since no one from his writings would conjecture that the Jews entertained any expectations of that nature.¹ And the execution, or murder, is represented as exciting a strong feeling against the perpetrator. There is nothing, consequently, to alter the impression we receive from the later chapters of the Acts, that the brethren who believed in Jesus were a popular sect—only distinguished from the rest of the Jews by the circumstance of their connecting their Messianic expectations with his person. And we have no ground for supposing that any direct change in the mutual feelings of Christians and Jews was produced by the siege.

Practically that event altered the relative importance of the parties in the Church, and gave a preponderance to the Gentile element, that became more marked in proportion to the wider diffusion of the new faith. The purely Jewish conception of the Kingdom of Heaven was inevitably modified

¹ The legend reported by Hegesippus (Euseb., H. E. B. II., c. 23) as to the circumstances attending the death of James is inconsistent with the statement of Josephus, who was a contemporary. It expresses the sentiments of a later age.

when the Gospel was preached to converts who had been under no previous obligation to obey the law. We see the first intimation of this in the writings of Paul; but his point of view was too comprehensive and liberal for the age. Those to whom he wrote seem either to have abused his doctrine by making it an excuse for license, or to have fallen back upon the authority of the Church, represented at the time by the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem. The principles that he enunciated bore, nevertheless, some fruit. It was impossible, in the face of protests so energetic and uncompromising, to impose upon the new converts the whole burthen of the law. Some might submit to circumcision as a "counsel of perfection," harmless under one aspect though essential under another; but to the majority the rite would be repulsive, and they would refuse to join the community if this were the condition of entrance. And it was imperative that the feelings of such men should be respected, if the Gentiles were to be admitted as brethren.

The so-called Apostolical decree may be regarded as expressing the terms upon which the Gentiles were ultimately permitted to enter the society. There may even have been a Council at Jerusalem at which such a concession was resolved upon; though, if so, it must have been of a much later date than that assigned to it in the Acts, and certainly was not assented to by Paul.¹ It is more probable that it represents a practical concession, tolerated, but not formally sanctioned by the Church at Jerusalem. Those who were "zealots of the law" in that city, and who in Antioch prevented Peter from eating with so-called brethren because they were not circumcised, would not, we may be certain, have consented to such a decree. And it is doubtful if the Apostles and Elders could have succeeded in procuring its acceptance in face of their opposition.

¹ His argument to the Corinthians (1 Cor. viii., x., 19-23) is a direct proof of this. The Epistle was written some years after the assumed date of the Council, and both the doubt of the Corinthians whether it is lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and the manner in which the question is treated by Paul, imply that there was no recognized rule, still less a binding decree, upon the subject.

When Jerusalem was captured, and the members of the Church there were slain, captive, or dispersed, their successors, whether at Pella or elsewhere, occupied a very different position. Even if they re-established themselves in Jerusalem, as was probably the case, the prestige of the city had departed, and they were no longer presided over by any of the Apostles. They were, consequently, unable to exercise any control over the progress of the body. The various churches were left to organize themselves, and to determine the conditions of admission and communion; which were not apparently relaxed. Candidates were admitted by baptism, and the only sacred rite appears to have been their partaking in common of the Lord's Supper.¹ The organization of the synagogue had been introduced into the Church, with such modifications as were demanded by its less exclusive attitude in relation to the Gentiles. The only profession required previous to baptism was faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,² implying, apparently, a belief in him as raised from the dead, and as the appointed judge of the world and founder of the Kingdom of God. Christians, however, were still in a modified sense a Jewish sect. They were, indeed, free from the obligation of the law, but they worshipped Jehovah—they accepted the Hebrew Scriptures³ as inspired—they believed in Jesus as the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy—they looked for his return to reign in Jerusalem as the King of the Jews, and they expected, as a consequence of their admission into the Church, to share in the

¹ 1 Cor. xi., 17, 18, 20, where "coming together," and "coming together to eat the Lord's Supper" appear to be convertible expressions. It was apparently accompanied by exhortation, and furnished an opportunity for a display of the various spiritual gifts with which individual brethren were endowed, not always orderly or decorous.

² This appears from the Acts of the Apostles throughout. It is impossible to suppose that the writer could without comment have represented Philip and Paul as baptizing a convert upon this profession only, if the Church at the time of his writing had required any other. In the case of the three thousand, this profession is apparently implied, and in that of Cornelius the gift of tongues is represented as dispensing with the necessity of any profession whatever.

³ In the Septuagint version with the Apocrypha.

glories of this Kingdom. He had broken down the barrier that had formerly excluded the Gentile world from a participation in the hopes and privileges of the Jews. They were now free to enter and share; but the hopes and the privileges were essentially Jewish.¹ They were a spiritual Israel—the true circumcision—grafted by baptism into the Hebrew stock—the seed of Abraham after the spirit, and heirs by faith of the promise made to him. These are a few of the expressions employed by early Christian writers to describe the position of the brethren who were merely baptized in relation to the promises of the Kingdom. And they shew how essentially Jewish the idea of that Kingdom was,—since it was only by adoption into the Jewish people that the Gentiles could hope to enter.

This was a condition that could not be permanent; and the relative importance of the two divisions of the Church, those who had been baptized after circumcision, and those who had never been circumcised, was gradually altered. The mere growth of the community, recruited from all nations indiscriminately, would slowly but certainly give the preponderance in numbers to the latter. And it was almost inevitable that they should not merely be more numerous, but that among them should exist a larger share of energy and ability. The destruction of the Church at Jerusalem allowed these tendencies to operate unchecked. If we may trust Eusebius, there was not, after the death of the Apostles, a single Jew among the bishops of the churches outside Judaea. The leadership of the new faith passed at once into the hands of the Gentiles. And they necessarily viewed the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven under another aspect; they did not reject the Jewish Scriptures, but they either allegorized them, or they passed over the exclusively Jewish aspect given to it in the prophets. Practically, these writings were so interpreted as to suit the alteration that was being effected in the constitution of the Church itself.

This change is illustrated by the difference between the Reve-

¹ This is especially shown in the writings of Justin.—Reuss, Hist. du Canon.

lations and the third Gospel, and also the Acts of the Apostles. The former of these was almost certainly composed after the death of Nero, and before the accession of Vespasian; the two latter probably during the reign of Trajan. In the former we see a protest against the teaching of Paul, not only in the introduction, but in the prominence throughout given to the Jews and to Jerusalem. In the latter there is a change. It is not that the rightful priority of the Jews is questioned, or that the authority of the law is denied; on the contrary, Jesus is represented as performing all legal obligations, and nowhere is his essentially Jewish character more distinctly marked. But the law is not of universal obligation, and the privileges of the Jews are not exclusive or absolute. They are opened to believing Gentiles, and may be forfeited by their own conduct. The sending forth of the seventy disciples, according to the number of the nations of the world, and the visit to the Samaritans, the former of which certainly is not historical, typify the universality of the good news, and the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven upon equal terms to the Gentiles. And after the death of Jesus the history of the Church is told in the same spirit. The Jewish element is represented as essential, and the Church at Jerusalem, or rather the Apostles and Elders there, as exercising a rightful authority in matters of discipline. But the Gentiles are entitled to equal privileges as brethren without being required to submit to circumcision. These works, consequently, are the products of a time when the process of transformation was operating, but was not completed. Probably the writer was unconscious that any such process was going on. He no doubt believed the Church to have reached its final condition, that in which it was to subsist until the coming of the Lord; and we can see that this was only a stage in the development of doctrine, and that it was impossible that Christianity should have been widely diffused without altogether outgrowing its Jewish mould.

The inevitable course of events was precipitated by the revolt of the Jews in Judæa under Barchocheba, and by the simultaneous risings in other places. The sufferings which they had endured, and the long delay of the promised restoration, had intensified and embittered their hopes and their enmities. They, as well as the Christians, expected that the Messiah would be revealed in the clouds of heaven, to take vengeance upon the oppressors of his people. They appropriated to themselves the imagery of the Apocalypse with which many among them must have been familiar. They anticipated the treading of the wine-press of the wrath of Jehovah until blood should run out, even up to the horses' bridles, and the fall of the mystic Babylon, drunken with the blood of the holy ones. They looked for the day when the fowls of the air should be summoned to the feast of the flesh of warriors and mighty men ; when the nations gathered together to fight against Jehovah and his people should be slain, even to the last man. And they felt that a duty was imposed upon them to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and that if they failed they might expose themselves to the curse of Meroz. They were called to reward Rome as she had rewarded them, and even to double to her what they had endured at her hands ; and they were assured that the appointed hour must have arrived, for the holy city had been trodden under foot, and the time of the Gentiles could not but have been accomplished. The harvest of the earth must be ripe for the sickle. The cup of the wrath of Jehovah must be full and ready to be poured out. The time to favour Zion had, no doubt, arrived ; and they would not be slack to seize it.

Looking at the revolt of the Jews from the Christian standpoint of the nineteenth century, or even looking at their impotence when the forces of the empire were directed against them, their conduct appears absurd and their course hopeless. But all this becomes at once intelligible, if we remember their unwavering faith in the prophecies, and the manner in which these were interpreted. And if, ten centuries later,

the mere reflex interest that Christians attach to Jerusalem could lead myriads to embark upon a hopeless expedition to recover possession of the place of the sepulchre of Jesus, in full confidence that God would preserve them from famine and pestilence and the sword; that he would guide them through unknown paths to the holy place, and would deliver the infidels to them as an easy prey on their arrival, we need not be surprised that the intense patriotic and religious fervour of the Jews, and their reliance upon the promised help of Jehovah should have led them to confront even the power of Rome. And the excesses of the Crusaders, their merciless slaughter of every unbeliever, even to the infant at the breast, may also enable us to understand, though not to excuse, the corresponding atrocities of the Jews in the moment of their transient success.

This outbreak disclosed the gulf that had gradually opened between Jew and Christian. The latter, as such, had no feelings connected with Jerusalem itself, excepting by anticipation. It was not as the seat of the Kingdom of David—the sacred city—hallowed by the glories and reverses, the struggles and successes of a thousand years—the scene of the visible manifestation of Jehovah, where he had so long dwelt among his people as their God—nor even as the scene of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus that Jerusalem possessed an interest in the minds of the Christians. They looked forward to the time when it would be made holy by the presence of the Christ miraculously displayed, and where as the seat of his Kingdom they would have a place among its inhabitants. Till then there was nothing in Jerusalem itself to awaken their interest; and there was everything in the aspirations and conduct of the revolted Jews to repel them; they, consequently, refused to join or to assist the movement, and were accordingly treated by Barchocheba as enemies and even as traitors. There was, in fact, just so much of Judaism about them as render it impossible that they could be regarded

as neutral. As they refused to join the insurgents, they were considered to be against them; and as they were known to expect the speedy advent of the Messiah to establish his Kingdom, their refusal to recognize Barchocheba, who claimed that title, was looked upon as a species of treason. They were accordingly treated with much cruelty, and great numbers were put to death.

From this time the position of the Jews and Christians was one of mutual antagonism. It is significant that the Church established in the new city, built by Hadrian on the site of Jerusalem, was a Gentile church presided over by Gentile Bishops;¹ and that contemporaneously with this we hear, for the first time, of the Ebionites as a distinct body. These latter were Jews who regarded Jesus as the Messiah, and had been baptized into his name, but who denied his miraculous conception and his pre-existence, and who maintained the permanent obligation of the law. The information which we possess as to their history and tenets is fragmentary and unreliable, but everything which we are told suggests the conclusion that they were the descendants of the Church at Jerusalem, and maintained in its original form the belief of the first disciples. They admitted the authority of all the Apostles but Paul, and they preserved the Gospel to the Hebrews, presumably the basis of our first Gospel. In a period of development men may separate themselves as effectually from the current of opinion by remaining stationary as by advancing in a wrong direction; such was the case with the Ebionites. They became heretics, not because they had changed, but because the standard of orthodoxy was altered. They remained zealots of the law in an age that had practically proved its unsuitableness, and faithful to their Judaical traditions after the very name of Jew had become an abomination, both to Christian and heathen. They serve in some degree as a landmark to shew the point of departure of

¹ Euseb., H. E. B. IV., c. 6.

Christian doctrine, and they thus enable us to appreciate its progress in the three quarters of a century that had elapsed since the career of Paul had terminated.

This alteration in the aspect of Christianity required some literary expression. The first three Gospels were all primarily Jewish. In each of them Jesus is made to address his invitations to the Jews; and the chief difference in this respect is the greater or less clearness with which the calling of the Gentiles is announced, and the greater or less prominence given to the obligations of the law. Such a picture was, however, no longer adequate. It was inconsistent not indeed with the history of the Church, but with its actual condition; for the Jews had been excluded, and the good news of the Kingdom had become the sole possession of the Gentiles. And, besides this, the belief in the establishment of an earthly kingdom at Jerusalem had been the cause of the revolts of the Jews, and of all the suffering which these had occasioned. And so long as this belief existed, it formed an inseparable link between Christianity and Judaism; for the gathering in of the Jews constituted one essential feature of the expected Kingdom. Nowhere, indeed, is this shewn more plainly than in the Apocalypse. But in the existing state of feeling such a belief was necessarily distasteful to the Church; a decisive proof of which is furnished by the circumstance that shortly after this time the Apocalypse was attributed to the heretic Cerinthus, apparently for no other reason than the repugnance which this tenet excited.

The idea, too, of the nature and person of Jesus suggested by the earlier Gospels had become insufficient. The feelings with which he was regarded by the Gentile converts had outgrown the conception that had satisfied the generation contemporary with the Apostles. The condition of admission into the Church was that the converts should profess a belief in Jesus, and be baptised into his name. It is probable that among many of the Gentile churches, at least in Asia Minor, the

Epistles of Paul were regularly read.¹ And these must have familiarized the disciples with the loftier views of the nature of Jesus that Paul entertained. There was something wanting in the literature of the Church then extant, for the brethren in the narratives transmitted to them could only know Jesus according to the flesh ; and this want would be the more perceptible in proportion as the decay or uncertainty of tradition afforded an opening for the introduction of novel views, more or less tinctured with the prevailing heresies of the time.

In an utter ignorance of the circumstances under which the third Gospel originated—time, place, and author being alike matters of conjecture—it is quite possible that at the period in question it was unknown or of little authority in the Church. And if not, its view of the nature and mission of Jesus would not meet the requirements of the age. For, if under one aspect as compared with the two earlier Gospels, it was an advance, under another as compared with the writings of Paul it was retrograde. And this must necessarily have been the case with any account of the life of Jesus, that confined itself within the limits already traced by tradition. So long as these boundaries were not overpassed it was competent to the Jewish or Judaizing brethren to contend for their view of the nature of Jesus and of the Gospel which he had preached. And though the example of Paul might shew that wider views could be contended for, yet he had been enabled to do this only by leaving out of sight the teaching and life of Jesus. And his fate shewed that there was no certainty of success in the conflict.

It had become necessary, therefore, if the position of the Church was to be assured, to rise to a loftier stand-point than even that which Paul had reached, and to give to the ideas visible from that elevation a concrete form in the human life of Jesus ; and this was accomplished by the author of the

¹ The authority of Paul was, however, disputed. Justin Martyr never mentioned his name, and he confines the number of the Apostles to twelve only—thus by implication excluding Paul. He also declares that those who permit the eating of things offered to idols are false prophets.—Reuss, *Hist du Canon*, p. 50.

fourth Gospel. Not, perhaps, that these various objects were consciously present to his mind, but that the position of the Church and the existing state of the dogma presented them as practical questions that demanded an answer; questions indeed which any one who desired a calm resting place for his own convictions, or a satisfactory basis for the faith of the brethren was required to solve.

The tone of the fourth Gospel enables us to estimate the extent to which the ideas it embodies had penetrated in the Christian body. The writings of Paul are controversial. If, for a moment, he raises himself above the atmosphere of strife that surrounds him, and reveals to those whom he addresses the loftier ideas with which his contemplations are familiar, he is almost instantly recalled by the necessity of repelling some attack, or vindicating some principle. The most sublime passages often terminate in a seemingly trivial argument or exhortation. And upon the hypothesis that the later Epistles are his, it might even be said that the stimulus of controversy was necessary to him; since these, if less polemical, are also in the same proportion less elevated. But in the fourth Gospel we seem to have passed beyond this stage. There is nothing to indicate any conflict in the writer's own mind, or any anticipation of objection from others. He appears to put forth his views in full reliance not merely that they are true, but that they will be received without question. No doubt this is in part due to the profound over-mastering character of his own convictions. But this alone would not have been sufficient. He must also have felt that these convictions harmonized with the prevailing sentiments, if they did not express the formal opinions of those for whom he wrote. Upon any other hypothesis it would be scarcely possible that some trace of the expectation of denial or opposition should not be found in his work.

This confidence was abundantly justified by the event. Within half a century from the earliest date that can with any plausi-

bility be assigned to its composition the new Gospel was received by all the orthodox Churches as the work of the Apostle whose authority it claims. Whatever protests might have been raised had died out, or had been silenced. The picture which it presents of Jesus ;—the figures under which it represents his relations to believers, the love which he displays to his disciples, and the deep personal love that he requires from them in return ;—the mystic union with himself to which he invites them, by means of which they shall be one with the Father ;—at once stimulated and satisfied the emotional aspect of religion, and put the wants of those who, in the actual state of the world, needed something beyond the moral teachings of the first Gospel, and who shrunk from the somewhat coarse enjoyments of the promised millenium. And besides this, it offered an object to the aspirations of believers which was raised above all the vicissitudes of time, and upon which their eternal hopes might safely be rested. And it justified that separation from the world which had, in fact, become the distinctive position of Christians. The Kingdom of Jesus, to which their first allegiance was due, was not of this world. To them, consequently, the conflicts raging around them, and the fortunes of the various competitors for empire were matters of indifference; and though this indifference might provoke hostility, such a result was only an additional proof of discipleship ; a new mark of their oneness with Jesus. The world hated them, because it had first hated their Master ; but whatever might be the tribulations which they were called upon to suffer, Jesus had endured the same and had vanquished the world for them as well as for himself. They were not to be taken out of the world ; but they were not to be of it. And while on earth the main object of their efforts and their prayers was that they might be kept from its evil.

There was yet another reason for its success ; perhaps the most influential. The view which it presented of the essential nature of Jesus—his pre-existence—his oneness with the Father—his divinity—justified to the improved religious consciousness of the

Church the worship that was already largely offered to him. From the first, when the new doctrine was preached among the Gentiles, Jesus was presented as the one object of belief. Faith in him, as the Lord, was the condition of entrance into the Church, and the guarantee of salvation. And that faith necessarily led to worship; though it did not necessarily imply a belief in his Godhead. There was nothing in the religious conceptions of Gentile converts that rendered it unsuitable for them to pray to a deified mortal,—a man in whom the Spirit of God had been manifested, and who had been raised to the skies. As, however, their ideas of the nature of the Deity became elevated, and especially as they became imbued with the monotheistic doctrines of the Hebrew Scriptures, the question would necessarily intrude how far this worship was compatible with the exclusive claims of Jehovah. And that question could only be answered either by elevating the nature of Jesus, so as to imply equality and union with the one God, or by distinguishing between the worship paid to both. The state of opinion in this respect was, and continued to be, fluctuating. The practical tendency in the Gentile Churches to pay divine worship to Jesus proved in the end to be irresistible. And this led to such an elevation of his nature in the creed of the Church as might justify the worship.

Only in Gentile Churches would this tendency be felt. It is sufficient to realize the different aspect under which the work of Jesus would appear to a Jewish and a Gentile believer to be satisfied of this. To the Jew the sole claim of Jesus was that he was the predicted Messiah, “the root and offspring of David,” who was to restore his Kingdom in the city which he had founded, though in more than its ancient splendour. Thus viewed he was simply the instrument for fulfilling the covenant long before made with the nation by Jehovah. He offered no new privilege; he brought no new promise. The promise and the privilege were theirs by inheritance. They were the children of Abraham, and, as such, heirs of the covenant. The Messiah, whenever

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manifested, could only fulfil the prophecies in which they had trusted. He would be the servant of Jehovah, commissioned and endowed by him to accomplish a purpose pre-determined and foretold. If he had died in order to the accomplishment of this work, this was no more than had been done by prophets and martyrs, even from the beginning of the dispensation. And if he had been raised from the dead, this was no more than the prophecies that foretold his coming had predicted with regard to Elias!

But far different from this was the aspect in which Jesus was necessarily regarded by Gentile believers. To them no promise had been made, or at any rate made known. If they were now invited to participate in the inheritance of the children of Israel, it was because a share in that inheritance had been purchased for them by Jesus; and their entrance into the promised Kingdom was through him. He had humbled himself that they might be exalted, and had died that they might live. But for him they would have been strangers and foreigners; without hope, and even without the knowledge of God: for it was through him alone that the one true God was made known to them. Whatever in the present state they possessed of knowledge, consolation, and love; whatever they anticipated in the coming age of admission to the presence of God, and of a share in the unending felicities of heaven, they owed to him. He was not merely an instrument; he was the conscious, willing mediator, through whom the love of God might flow down to man, and man be enabled to recognize and respond to its manifestations. And, above all, it was, in some mysterious and inexplicable manner, only by means of his voluntary humiliation and suffering and death that this mediation, with all its blissful consequences, was possible.¹ It is no

¹ The Church had not yet degraded the mystery of redemption into a legal process in which God is the pursuer and man the defendant; and man being decreed to pay a sum far beyond his means is freed from the consequences of his inability because the debt is satisfied out of the infinite merits of Christ.

wonder, then, that they were unable to keep their views with regard to his nature upon the same level as those of the first Jewish disciples.

Out of this view would arise, not only a tendency to aggrandize the person of Jesus, to elevate his nature, and to make him the object of worship, but also a deep, and even an exclusive love to himself. As these conceptions were dwelt upon, his character and work would acquire a prominence that sometimes cast into the shade the part which God was represented to have taken in the transaction, and concentrated the feelings of the believer rather upon Jesus, who had been the agent, than upon God, who had been the author of the work.¹ Without pursuing this topic, which only later acquired any practical importance, it is at least obvious that to any one who realized this aspect of his character, not only would Jesus become an object of love, but all the other points of view from which the earlier Evangelists had regarded him would become comparatively insignificant. It was a small matter that he had been a teacher of righteousness, in comparison with the love that he had shewn in laying down his life for his friends; or that he was the Son of David, in comparison with his voluntary abasement in becoming flesh, and exposing himself to the misconstructions and insults of the Jews. The incidents that had been specially relied upon to prove his right to be recognized as the Messiah became trivial and unimportant. Everything, indeed, faded into littleness, in comparison with the one central fact that, for the sake of the Gentiles, and in order to bring them within the scope of the promises, Jesus, the pre-existing Logos

¹ This is the tendency of modern Evangelicalism. Any collection of hymns in use among the Low Church or orthodox Dissenters will afford abundant evidence of this. In a hymn, which is said to have been distributed by hundreds of thousands, the singer addressing Jesus, is made to say, "All my love shall centre, on thee and thee alone." Contrast with this, from the lips of Jesus himself, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." It will be seen that both Paul and the author of the fourth Gospel condemn this tendency by implication. It had not even at the time the latter wrote acquired any such development as to need explicit condemnation.

—the only begotten¹ of the Father—the framer of the worlds, had become man, and as man had lived and suffered and died.

Under the influence of these feelings the fourth Gospel appears to have been composed. The author, obviously, writes out of the abundance of his heart. It is not a theologian who has reasoned out a scheme which he proposes to support by argument whom we have before us. It is a believer in whom deep and prolonged meditation on the person and life of Jesus, and a vivid realization of all that he and his Gentile fellow-converts gain by his death, have kindled a fervid love, and have inspired a conception of his Lord corresponding to the love he had displayed and awakened. It was no mere rhetorician who imagined the lesson of humility conveyed by the washing of the feet of the disciples, or who penned the tender and elevated discourse with which Jesus terminates his human intercourse with them, or who gave so endearing an aspect to the joys of heaven. These and numerous other passages are the natural unforced expression of deep feeling and assured conviction. It is true, no doubt, that the work has a kind of dramatic completeness and consistency—that the incidents are so marshalled, and the discourses so arranged, as to bring into ever-increasing relief the divinity of Jesus and the blindness of the Jews—that the termination is foreshadowed from the beginning, and that all the events related lead up to the catastrophe. But this art, if such it be, is “an art that nature makes.” This is the form in which the heavenly drama depicts itself to the imagination of the writer—the necessary process through which the light of the world must pass in its conflict with darkness. Here and there are special phrases and incidents called forth by the controversies of the day; but these are exceptional. The work is not primarily polemical—though its form is necessarily, in some degree, determined by the relation of the author’s own mind to

¹ This term, *μονογενῆς*, appears intended to contradict the views of those who regarded the Word—the Son—the Wisdom, etc., etc., as so many separate emanations or offsprings of Jehovah.

prevailing opinions. But the main object is to raise the idea of Jesus above the atmosphere of controversy—to depict him as he is in himself—and thus, by unveiling his true image, to reduce to their real value all the false or inadequate semblances with which the Church had till then been deluded.

In this object the author has only half succeeded. In the aspect of Jesus, indeed, which is presented to believers, there is little to desire. The picture of care, watchfulness, and foresight,—of an union begun on earth, to be perfected in heaven ;—of forbearance, humility, and sympathy—all prompted and pervaded by a love stronger than death, remains, and, probably, will ever remain unsurpassed. But in that aspect which is presented to the Jews it must be confessed there is something distasteful and undignified. The perpetual self-laudation becomes almost monotonous ;—we can scarcely be otherwise than weary of the “hard sayings” apparently designed to disgust those to whom they were necessarily unintelligible ;—we are repelled by the want of forbearance to inevitable ignorance, and of pity to the unthankful and unworthy. Hardly, indeed, can we escape the feeling that those who saw only this aspect of his character were not without excuse when they rejected him. And this feeling is strengthened by the circumstance that his life appears to be without either plan or object. Nothing that he does is intelligible from a human point of view. This feature, indeed, may be regarded by modern Christians as a proof that he belonged to some higher sphere. But to those among whom he is represented as living and moving, it could only have rendered him the more inexplicable, and thus have justified their refusal to recognize his claim.

In spite of the novel aspect under which the life and teaching of Jesus are depicted in the fourth Gospel, the author has nowhere broken with Christian tradition, excepting, perhaps, in the one point of the relation of Jesus to his countrymen. In everything else there are links by which his views are connected with those of the earlier Evangelists. This is the

natural result of his stand-point, and distinguishes him from contemporary heretics. He does not, as they did, ignore the traditions of the Church—he adopts and transforms them. The Jesus whom he depicts is no phantom, but is made flesh—he is the Jesus of Nazareth, though not the prophet of Galilee—the Jesus to whom John bore witness, though he is neither baptized nor tempted—the worker of mighty works, though many of them are new and all have a symbolical or dogmatic meaning which is absent in the account of the Synoptics. He drives traffickers from the Temple, but it is at the beginning and not at the close of his ministry. He makes his entry into Jerusalem riding upon an ass, and so in fact fulfils the prophecy, but his disciples attach no importance to the event, and only after he is glorified remember that it had occurred. He is taken before Pilate as King of the Jews, but he disclaims that character and declares his sole mission to be to bear witness to the truth; and so throughout. The material foundation is the same, but the structure erected upon it is profoundly modified, and in most parts altogether original.

It is uncertain how far the incidents related by this writer alone are to be regarded as his own invention. Possibly he has only selected and modified traditions that were current in the circle in which he lived. The story of the raising of Lazarus was probably the result of an unconscious development of the parable, and not of a deliberate transformation on the part of the Evangelist. The identification of Lazarus as a brother of Martha and Mary, which gives the story a point of connection with the earlier history, and the details of the scene are no doubt due to his imagination. So the strange legend of the Pool of Bethesda, the marvellous troubling of the waters, and their healing virtue in consequence,—a legend which could only have grown up outside Judæa,—was probably current in the community. We know that there were abundant stories of this nature attributed to Jesus, and it is, perhaps, more probable that the unknown author of the fourth

Gospel employed such of these as commended themselves to his judgment, or were more consistent with the object of his work, than that he deliberately invented them.

The view thus suggested may be assailed as derogatory to the writer,¹ and as inconsistent with what we should naturally expect from him. It may be said on the one hand that no one who had composed such a work would be likely to sink his own individuality and allow its composition to be attributed to another ; and on the other, that a man so capable of imagining and portraying the highest exemplar of virtue and truth would not in his own person have perpetrated a practical lie, by attributing to an inspired Apostle that which was the work of an uninspired disciple. With regard to the former of these objections it may be sufficient to say that not a few Christians, prior to the composition of the fourth Gospel, had died in support of their belief, and the abnegation of literary fame for the sake of promoting the cause of Christ, and of the Church, was certainly a smaller sacrifice. And with regard to the second, it would scarcely have been intelligible to the writer, or to any Christian of the age. The object of the work was not self-aggrandizement, but the glory of Jesus and the good of the

¹ Much in the same way as the suggestion of the Bishop of Natal with regard to the authorship of the Elohistic portions of Genesis, and the Book of Deuteronomy, have been. With regard to the invectives heaped upon the bishop for having accused of forgery two such men as Samuel and Jeremiah, there are two remarks to be made : 1—What we term literary forgery was practiced not merely without scruple, but even without a suspicion of impropriety in all early ages. Whenever anyone believed that he had important truths to announce, which, if resting upon his own authority, would be powerless to influence the public mind—the obvious and natural course was to attribute them either to divine inspiration or to some ancient and venerated name. The writer of the Book of Proverbs, for instance, who certainly was not Solomon, no more dreamed of wrong in putting the name of the renowned monarch at the head of his collection, than did the later Greek writer who gave the name of *Aesop* to his fables, or the Sophist who, as a literary exercise, wrote the Epistles of Phalaris. And 2—Samuel offered up Agag as a sacrifice to Jehovah (hewed Agag in pieces before Jehovah) after his life had been spared by his captor, and Jeremiah sanctioned the slaughter of the high priests of Baal by Josiah. Is forgery of the kind suggested so much worse than human sacrifice, or burning of heretics, that the men who performed or sanctioned the one from a mistaken sense of duty were necessarily incapable of the other ?

brotherhood ; and the only question would be how these could be best promoted. We might almost say that its object was not truth but edification ; but this would not accurately represent the writer's point of view ; for he believed that he held the truth. Probably, almost certainly, he felt that he had the help of the promised Paraclete, and that the original of the likeness which he drew had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. And if, as many collateral circumstances indicate, the work was composed at Ephesus, and was connected with the traditions or opinions current in that church, and even though modified by the writer's own individuality, he might well believe that those traditions had proceeded from the Apostle who had so long presided there, and that upon his testimony the Gospel was really founded.

The writings of Paul, and the fourth Gospel, have been the principal sources from which later Christian writers have drawn their proofs in support of the orthodox doctrine of the Church, though that doctrine differs profoundly from the view held by either writer. This difference has been partly the result of the necessity imposed upon Apologists to elevate the nature of Jesus, in order to justify the worship paid to him ; and, in part, it has been owing to a misconception of the true meaning of the language employed. It is not necessary to say anything more as to the former of these tendencies, but a few words in conclusion may be permitted in order to illustrate the latter.

Much of the phraseology employed by Paul, and by the author of the fourth Gospel, upon which modern orthodox deductions are based, was, as we have seen, borrowed from a peculiar philosophy. And the object of that philosophy was not to exalt the attributes, or manifestations, of persons to which this phraseology was applied, but to remove the God whom it recognized from all relation to matter, either as its origin or its ruler. The functions exercised by the Word or wisdom of God were functions which

thinkers of that school of philosophy deemed it derogatory to ascribe to God himself. They implied relation and imperfection, and therefore could not belong to the one absolute and perfect Being. The creation of the worlds, for instance, which to modern theologians is a conclusive proof of the absolute divinity of Jesus, was originally attributed to the Word of God for precisely the opposite reason. That all things were made by Jesus as the *Logos* was a mark, not of equality, but of inferiority. And the same was the case even when God was represented as making the worlds by him; for this, though removing the idea of moral imperfection from one who was only performing the work of the Father, preserved his relative character, and necessarily implied subordination and dependence.

There is nothing, indeed, in any of these writings inconsistent with this view. It is true that Jesus, in the fourth Gospel, is made to claim oneness with the Father. But the writer himself explains the nature of this union in a way to remove all misconception, when he describes Jesus as praying that his disciples may be one with him, in the same manner that he is one with the Father. And though the Jews are represented as having understood him to claim to be God, yet this is only one of the many misconceptions attributed to them, owing to their taking literally what Jesus had spoken in a figure. And the mistake is immediately corrected by a quotation from their Scriptures, in which the word "gods" is used figuratively; thus teaching them that it was only in the same sense that the word had been used by Jesus himself. And in all the writings of Paul, high as is the view that he entertains of the nature and office of Jesus, his inferiority to the Father is uniformly preserved.

In proportion as the Church, by defining its own creed, separated itself from other societies, the opinions these latter held were first rejected and then forgotten. And the circumstance that the immense majority of Christians belonged to the poor and uneducated classes, necessarily gave a preponderance to those teachers whose knowledge and mode of thought

were most nearly on a level with the minds of their hearers, and whose doctrines were thus best adapted to their apprehension. And hence there was a tendency to deprecate philosophy, and to proclaim the incompetency of human reason of itself to deal with questions touching the nature of God, or his relation to the world and man, or his purposes with regard to the unbelievers and the faithful. Corresponding with this depreciation of the unaided reason, there was an elevation of the Scripture as the sole and sufficient source of all religious truth, and of the Church as its one infallible interpreter. And, when this point was reached, it was inevitable, under the influence of the prevailing sentiment with regard to Jesus, that the very phrases which, as at first employed, indicated his inferiority, should, when their real meaning was lost, be quoted to prove his equality and even his identity with God.

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